Research Report

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Newspaper Readership Project

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THE WORLD OF THE WORKING JOURNALIST

JUDEE K. BURGOON
MICHAEL BURGOON
CHARLES K. ATKIN

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH STAFF:

DAVID BULLER
JULIA CRYSTLER
JAMES DILLARD
JAMES GAUDINO
MILTON SHATZER

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INTRODUCTION

The last decade has been one of almost continuous research on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers of news. The national Newspaper Readership Project has systematically researched the reader; the larger newspaper groups have developed on-going research programs investigating predictors of readership in specific cities; individual newspapers have conducted readership studies to help guide management decision making; academics have examined readership trends.

But to date, little is known about the professional producer of news, the working journalist.

What do journalists regard as news? What shapes their news judgments? What do news people know about readers? Do they get readership research reports and do they want such research? Do they think their newspapers are keeping pace with the changing needs of readers? Are they optimistic about the future of print journalism? Do younger news people hold different attitudes about the profession than those who have been in the industry longer? Are they insulated from the public? Are journalists happy with their jobs and with the way their newspaper is managed? What professional concerns are uppermost in their thoughts?

These questions and more prompted the Newspaper Readership Project and the American Society of Newspaper Editors to sponsor jointly a study of the world of the practicing journalist. Working with the NRP research committee, researchers from Michigan State University developed two versions of a questionnaire. One was a 17-page booklet that was completed by 489 working journalists at all levels of responsibility within ten newspapers at eight separate locations. The second was an in-person interview schedule that was used in face-to-face discussions with 187 journalists at participating newspapers.

Each in-person interview was conducted by a trained member of the Michigan State University research team and lasted from one to two hours. The research team chose the people to be interviewed in depth. Some were selected because of the position they held in the newsroom. Others were selected at random to represent the views of that organization. Every employee in each newsroom was encouraged to complete the written version of the questionnaire.

The in-person interviews were recorded on audio tape with the permission of the participants. No journalist refused that request. At least two and up to six members of the research team then listened to and coded the tapes to ensure reliable coding of responses.

The primary newspapers participating in this study were The New London Day (Connecticut), The Morning News and Evening Journal (Wilmington, Delaware), The Independent and Daily Mail (Anderson, South Carolina), The Tampa Tribune (Florida), The Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio), The Eagle and Beacon (Wichita, Kansas), The San Diego Union (California), and The Wenatchee World (Washington). While these newsrooms provided the main source of data for most of the conclusions drawn, a ninth newspaper agreed to serve as a pilot test for this project, The State Journal (Lansing, Michigan). Insights gained from participants in that newsroom are also included in this report.

The newspapers selected for the project were chosen by the research team to provide a broad cross-section of journalists and newspapers across the country. All of the following considerations guided selections: circulation size, market penetration, publication cycle, ownership arrangement, unionization, size of newsroom staff, geographic location, size and nature (e.g., urban v. nonurban) of the community, amount of competition from other newspapers and other media, and presence or absence of a readership committee or ombudsman. Every attempt was made to ensure that this sample reflected the range of daily newspaper operations. All newspapers contacted by the research team agreed to participate, as did all personnel who were invited to be interviewed.

The technical appendix to this report provides a detailed description of the characteristics of the eight locations and of the respondents to the questionnaire. Of the six morning and five afternoon papers studied (including the pilot location), the smallest had a circulation of around 7000, the largest, in excess of 400,000. The smallest of the nine newsrooms had 25 employees, the largest 225. Three locations had unionized newsrooms, one had a readership committee and one had an ombudsman. Two locations had independent ownership; the remaining, group-owned papers have varying ownership histories. Market penetration ranged from less than half to nearly 90%.

Among the journalists who were surveyed, two-thirds were male. Half were under age 35. Nearly one-fourth had been in the industry less than five years, and over half had been in the industry more than 10 years; 32% were reporters, 26% held supervisory roles and the remainder included columnists, copy editors, editorial writers, photographers and cartoonists. Nearly half had held their present job for less than three years. About one-fifth had less than a college degree while 14% held a graduate degree.

These figures suggest that the newspapers and news people surveyed did include a wide range of characteristics and experiences. Given that large numbers of respondents had been in their present location a short period of time, it is also fair to conclude that impressions the journalists reported extend far beyond the nine sites where the research was conducted.

The technical appendix to this report gives more information on the sample plan, the statistical procedures and the decision rules used to develop the conclusions reported here. All data from the written questionnaire were subjected to statistical tests and only where statistically significant (nonchance) findings were detected have conclusions been drawn. If, for example, no location differences are reported or it is stated that no such differences were found, it means that responses across locations did not differ more than they would by chance alone and that the findings therefore apply equally to all sites.

Without the help of the editors at these locations and the assistance of the editors on the research committee, it would have been impossible to undertake such a massive study. We are indeed grateful for the courtesy and assistance we received from everyone involved in this effort.

HIGHLIGHTS

- News people say they know what makes news but can't explain it to others.
- The predominant influences on news people's definitions of news are those people and organizations who have the most direct access to the newsroom.
- Journalists disagree on how much agreement exists within newsrooms, and their own news priorities are at odds with what they think their newspaper's priorities are.
- The typical news person professes a desire for more familiarity and involvement with the public but limits initiatives to do so.
- Mobility, long working hours and an attitude that news people are different from readers contribute to journalists feeling out of touch.
- News people enjoy talking with each other and would like to spend more time discussing their newspaper with their bosses.
- Leadership in newsrooms ranges from laissez-faire to authoritarian, with reporters having considerable control over what gets covered.
- Most journalists do not believe their newspaper has an identifiable or consistent news policy. Those who do are more likely to see supervisors and readers as like minds.
- Even though a minority of journalists in nonsupervisory roles believe their supervisors are similar to them, the perceived dissimilarity doesn't translate into conflict.
- News people like to complain about their work, but they love it even though it causes stress.
- News people underestimate their readers' dependence on newspapers, especially for hard news, and overestimate the public's use of television and interest in fluff.
- News people have mixed feelings about whether the public trusts the newspaper and they don't believe the public is highly satisfied with their product.
- Journalists believe their coverage of news events substantially influences the public.
- A majority of journalists appear to hold a patronizing and unflattering view of their readers.
- Information suppliers are information addicts. They show high consumption of media, especially print media.
- Journalists keep abreast of trends in public opinion by reading poll results but are much less likely to read readership research reports.

- News people are apprehensive about the research studies that are becoming increasingly widespread in the industry. They have limited exposure to research findings, some skepticism about the validity of the procedures, and some reluctance to utilize findings in decision-making.

- News people hold a moderately positive image of their own newspaper but are tentative about its future and public image.

- Most journalists attribute declining readership of newspapers to the popularity of television.

- Good computer systems make the news business more fun for all except copy editors.

- A trend toward emphasizing style and technique over the traditional 5 W's worries editors.

- Many journalists look back on their formal education with less than a positive attitude about those experiences. A majority want additional training.

- In journalists' bid to become independent of political pressure and civic bias, they may be becoming elitists, risking alienation of the public they are supposed to serve.

NEWS AS TODAY'S JOURNALIST SEES IT

What Is News?

> "News is what raises eyebrows."
>
> "News is the flux of events."
>
> "News is four things: blood, sex, war and names."
>
> "News is what I want to write about."
>
> -- Working journalists, 1981

News people say they know what makes news but can't explain it to others.

Both the interviews and the surveys opened by asking for the respondents' definition of news. While most quickly supplied a pat definition, many elaborated during interviews that news is difficult, if not impossible, to define. Judging news value was referred to by some as a sense a journalist either has or has not. Without this "right stuff" of journalism, the young journalist may be weeded out of the profession. The journalists we interviewed, however, were often hard pressed to articulate what distinguishes news from ordinary events.

When probed, they identified qualities, albeit vague ones, that make something newsworthy (Table 1.1). Most believed news is information with a consequence, usually defined in terms of what affects people's lives. That kind of judgment is easy, the journalists said, because important issues and events that affect their readers are readily distinguishable from those that don't. News also should be interesting and most agreed that interest is a quality inherent in the news event. Whether interest was equated with unusualness, unexpectedness, novelty or emotional impact varied greatly, however.

News also should be timely; the rest is either history or speculation. Timeliness does not imply just covering breaking events. It includes pursuing the second-day angle on stories that break just after deadline and it includes issues and events that may have long-term impact. Timeliness translates into "current" rather than "immediate" for most journalists. For others, it means whatever has not been covered by TV or other newspapers.

Table 1.1

Major Defining Characteristics of "News"*	Percent of Responses
1. Consequence (Affect lives of readers, 16%; educate/inform readers, 7% important to reader's lifestyles or ability to cope, 5%; "should know" news; watchdog/surveillance; moral/social importance; affect status quo)	41%
2. Interest (Unknown, unusual or aberrant facts, 5%; entertaining; human interest, emotion arousing, contact with others; interest to editorial staff; people would talk about it; social norms/styles; good writing)	32%
3. Timeliness (New happenings, 7%; current happenings, 5%; new angles on events; new trends)	17%
4. Proximity (Local events other than government/politics; local government/politics; other local impact; local trends/issues)	5%
5. Prominence (People famous for "hard news"; people famous for "soft news"; other media coverage; famous events)	2%
6. Other	3%

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* These characteristics were derived from coding each journalist's definition on as many characteristics as present, up to a maximum of ten. Percentages are based on total mentions (N = 1055) across all respondents. Within categories, percentages for most frequently occurring answers are also indicated.

News is generally local, but local may be defined as that which has local impact as well as that which is geographically proximal. International developments that threaten war, for example, can be defined as local because they have consequences for the local community. That which happens nearby is in itself also generally important. One editor summarized the relationship by noting that "interest and importance standards rise the farther away you get." When journalists weigh local versus state versus national and international news, most assign highest priority to local news, followed by regional and state news. National and international news follow both in importance, largely because the journalists believe such information is available to the reader from sources other than the local newspaper.

News is also prominent people and famous events, but again, prominence is generally related to consequence and interest. News, then, is those events and people that have impact, that are interesting and that are timely--the usual textbook answer.

But news people were quick to qualify that these dimensions cannot be used to judge the value of a news story separate from the context of the "news day." That is, newsworthiness must be judged within the context of events in the world at a given time. This distinction is important, journalists said, and is a large element in their "news sense." They and only they have access to the totality of the "news day." Therefore, the reader cannot decide what has consequence in this context. Neither can the academic researcher who searches for generalities about what is newsworthy.

Dimensions of news are not equal, said journalists. Consequence, for example, is more important than interest; the latter can be created by the writer. In the minds of many journalists, this also argues against letting audience interest dictate news, because many believe readers are not really interested in important events. "I think (what) people want to know is the more personal stuff," argued one journalist.

Far more (43%) of those interviewed stated that their responsibility is to tell readers what they "ought to know" than what readers might "want to know" (1%). Said one journalist, "We need to act as an antenna for the reader." "After all," claimed one editor, "TV news is run by reader surveys." The implication is that TV caters to the audience's desires, an inherently inferior approach to journalism. Thus the majority viewed news as being what they--reporters and editors--think it is.

The majority (56%) favored a balance between the two and many noted that a dichotomy need not exist between what the reader ought to know and wants to know. Instead, they said the journalist's job is to create interest in important stories by "packaging (them) in a manner that makes the public want to read them." Others thought it arrogant to dictate to the reader..

While most used themselves as a gauge for the average reader's interest and lifestyle, many acknowledged that the life of the journalist is likely to be different. "Success lies in the ability to relate to the reader," offered one individual, "and newspaper people have gotten so middle class that they have forgotten what affects people." According to this perspective, reporters who equate reader interest and impact with "anything that matters to me" are probably missing the target.

The types of stories news people typically consider newsworthy appear in Table 1.2. Not surprisingly, journalistic priorities are given to local and breaking news. There were differences of opinion expressed by journalists from big as compared to small circulation papers. The smaller papers tended to give higher relative priority to features while the larger papers gave lesser priority to routine government news. The type of media environment in which the paper circulated (e.g., the presence of a nearby major metropolitan paper or local television) also affected how much obligation it felt to cover non-local news and news already reported by broadcast media.

Table 1.2

News Category	Average Response*	Category	Average Response
Breaking news	4.46	Business and Finance	3.56
Local news	4.43	Scandals and corruption	3.53
National news	4.02**	Analysis of long term trends	3.36
State news	3.82**	News items already reported by broadcast media	3.00**
Investigative reports	3.75	Service news column	2.77
Interpretive background stories	3.73	Routine government news	2.41**
International news	3.72		
Features on people and lifestyles	3.66**		

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* The means are based on a 1 (very low priority) to 5 (very high priority) scale, with 3 being the midpoint.

**Results differed significantly across locations.

Despite the differences of opinion, and despite varying attitudes toward the reporter's ability to speak for or represent the general population, most maintain that defining news is a journalistic prerogative at the least and more likely, a journalistic responsibility.

Journalists were also asked to rank several qualities often used to evaluate a news story. As indicated in Table 1.3, accuracy and impartiality were considered most important by most respondents. The investigative

Table 1.3

Statement	Ranking percent: 1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	Average Rank
Below are several attributes often associated with the quality of a news story. How would you rank them? Rank from 1 (highest) to 6 (lowest), with no ties:				
Accuracy	96%	2%	2%	1.21
Impartiality	62%	26%	12%	2.72
Depth	21%	66%	13%	3.31
Investigative enterprise	10%	59%	31%	3.96
Literary style	3%	31%	65%	4.73
Sophistication of treatment	6%	17%	77%	5.06

qualities of depth of coverage and investigative enterprise were ranked as next in importance, and the style and sophistication of treatment were ranked as least important comparatively.

What and Who Shapes News Judgments?

> "Sometimes I wonder how many newspapers are edited for their editors instead of for the public I think there is a good deal of it that goes on. But it is very discreet, so you wouldn't admit it."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "The publisher has a bias toward business. He is against bad news about the economy. We play it down."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "The executive editor sets the agenda with the city editor. The publisher indirectly affects (news judgments) through the executive editor."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

The predominant influences on news people's definitions of news are those people and organizations who have the most direct access to the newsroom.

In exploring what today's journalist considers newsworthy, a major issue the study addressed was how journalists decide what is news and what people or factors influence those decisions. Influences on journalists' personal definitions of news were probed along with influences on their newspaper's process of deciding what is news.

Most journalists report that what they consider news today is different than what they considered news when they first became a journalist. When asked if their definition of news had changed since the time they entered the profession, 86% responded that it had. Of these respondents, 29% said it had changed only slightly, 38% said it had changed somewhat and 20% said it had changed "very much."

A series of questions probed what might account for this evolving definition of news. The news people were asked to estimate the amount of influence various persons and organizations have on their personal concept of what is newsworthy (see Table 1.4). Despite the fact that only about half (54%) of the news people hold a journalism degree, journalistic training rated the greatest amount of influence. As people reported in the in-depth interviews, some of that training was in the form of on-the-job experience. Supervisors and news sources were rated as next most influential, followed by peers on the staff and priorities of network news and prestige papers. Least influential were the findings of readership surveys, local competing media, and friends and acquaintances.

Table 1.4

Influences on the Journalist's Definition of "News"*

Percent:	Influential (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Not Influential (1 or 2)	Average
Journalistic training	64%	20%	16%	3.71
Supervisors	46%	30%	24%	3.29
News sources	41%	34%	25%	3.22
Peers on the staff	34%	32%	34%	2.95
Priorities of network news and prestige newspapers	28%	36%	35%	2.96
Friends and acquaintances	26%	30%	44%	2.71
Local competing news media	11%	32%	47%	2.62
Findings of readership research	24%	27%	49%	2.55

* The scale ranged from 1 (not at all influential) to 5 (very influential). Responses of 1 or 2 have been grouped under the label "not influential," responses of 3, under the label "in-between" and responses of 4 or 5, under the label "influential."

These results indicate that for the practicing journalist, the most influential factors in determining the definition of "news," besides formal journalistic training, are those persons or sources with whom the journalist interacts in the everyday work environment. These include supervising editors, staff peers, reporters, news sources and the wire services.

Journalists were also asked if their newspaper had a policy which defined news. No newspaper reported the existence of any explicit policies. Some editors who were asked this question responded that they tried to set guidelines and that policies were implicitly understood. However, most of the news staffers did not recognize the existence of any such policies. Only 21% of interviewees reported the presence of any kind of policy, while 73% said they were not aware of any. This is not too startling a perception when one considers the difficulty that many newsroom personnel had articulating their conception of news. Often the remark was made that news was too abstract a term to be easily defined. This ambiguity was also cited frequently as a reason for the lack of a newsroom policy on what constitutes news.

Another potential influence on one's definition of news is the person or persons the journalist has in mind when writing or editing a story. In the interviews, the journalists were asked, "When you are writing (editing) stories, who are you writing (editing) for... what target audiences do you have in mind... your peers, your sources, your superiors, the average reader, or who?" The most commonly cited target was the reader (mentioned by 66%). Others equated writing for oneself as writing for the reader. "We are average people," said one. "If we think it's important and interesting, so will they (the readers)." Another echoed the same thought: "I write for myself. I consider myself typical of the audience, I hope. They like the same things that I do."

Other less commonly cited audiences were peers on the staff (9%) and editors (8%). "A lot of people write for their peers. This contest thing is overemphasized," stated one journalist. Another remarked, "We say we are writing for our readers, (but) we are trying to outwrite each other."

Writing for anyone other than the reader seemed to be almost an illegal act on the part of the journalist. However, those who initially said that the reader was the target would often admit after probing that they had different or additional audiences in mind.

Another series of questions addressed the ways in which the newspaper as a whole determines what is newsworthy. Specifically, the influences on the newspaper's definition and the decision-making processes within the newsroom were assessed. Table 1.5 contains the results of a question which asked, "Now we would like to know what factors influence the dominant conception of what is news in your newspaper." The journalists felt that their editors, the wire services, reporters, news sources, national newspapers, readers who communicate directly with the paper, and elected and non-elected public leaders and officials are most influential in setting the newspaper's definition of "news." The least influential, in the journalists' opinions, are the newspaper's public relations department, any existing readership committee or ombudsman, and the newspaper's advertising department. Moderate influence was reported for the competing local media and national broadcast media.

In the personal interviews, journalists were asked to indicate the extent to which day-to-day decisions in assigning priority to news items are influenced by a number of similar factors. Sixty-six percent (66%) of those interviewed said that "the ideas that are generated by the reporters" are highly influential; 32% said the "ideas that flow down to reporters" are highly influential; 23% said that "the agenda set by the wire services" is highly influential; 20% said that "initiatives from the public at large" are highly influential; 2% said that "local leaders who direct attention to certain issues" are highly influential; and no one (0%) said that "the findings of readership surveys" are highly influential.

Table 1.5

Influences on the Newspaper's Definition of "News"

Percent:	Influential (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Not Influential (1 or 2)	Average
Supervising editors	92%	6%	3%	4.41
Wire services	69%	22%	9%	3.85
Reporters	63%	27%	11%	3.70
News sources	53%	37%	11%	3.54
National newspapers (New York Times, etc.)	47%	26%	28%	3.25
Readers who directly communicate with the newspaper	41%	31%	28%	3.16
Nonelected community leaders	36%	37%	28%	3.09
Local elected community officials	36%	34%	30%	3.09
Competing local print media	35%	27%	39%	2.91
Competing local broadcast media	29%	33%	39%	2.83
National network TV news	30%	33%	37%	2.87
Competing local broadcast media	29%	33%	39%	2.83
News magazines (Time, Newsweek)	16%	33%	52%	2.52
Advertising department	16%	20%	65%	2.16
Readership committee/ ombudsman	12%	18%	70%	1.95
Public relations department	7%	18%	76%	1.79

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* Asked on a scale from 1 (not at all influential) to 5 (very influential).

In general, the news people indicated that the major influence on a day-to-day basis was the news itself. "(We are) captives of the news," was one journalist's opinion. On the question of who generates the ideas for stories, most were in agreement that reporters were most influential. One editor stated, "What I'd like is to see the reporters generating more. That's their job." A reporter observed, "A whole lot of editors know little about the town...reporters are more sensitive to what's going on." Another responded, "Writers hear about things and bring the ideas into the editors who make decisions on how to write it."

These results, not surprisingly, are similar to the influences on the journalists' own definitions of news. It appears that those who are most influential are those people or organizations with direct access to the newsroom-- the journalists themselves, their sources, and the wire services. The greater the "distance" from the newsroom, the less perceived influence on conceptions of newsworthiness.

Apart from the people who influence news decisions, one internal organizational factor is the beat structure. Most respondents agreed that beat assignments affected the amount of coverage given to certain topics, such as local governmental news, and that the presence of fixed beats could result in important omissions of topics falling outside the beat categories. But most felt that the use of general assignment reporters and periodic revisions in the beat structure compensated for possible problems.

A final issue addressed was whether news-gathering and writing are influenced by the presence of "sacred cows" (a term supplied by the respondents themselves). When asked, "Are there any areas that you think are news that people in management discourage you from covering," the interviewees first responded that there were no specific issues they absolutely could not cover (a not surprising reply since few reported a newspaper policy defining "news"). When probed further, some of the news personnel did volunteer that while there were no sacred cows per se, there were topics that the editors did not emphasize or benignly neglected. In other instances, the reporters heard through the newsroom "grapevine" which topics were not favorites of certain editors or publishers. Among those mentioned occasionally were such things as the wine and liquor industry, gay rights, negative business news, labor problems at the newspaper itself, science news, financial news, blacks, local utilities and banks, unions, some social issues and legally sensitive topics. Reporters were quick to point out, however, that if the story was big enough, these topics were not taboo. They also added that they had better be sure of the accuracy of the more controversial stories to avoid possible legal action.

Is There Consensus on What is News?

> "There is a lot of consensus--we don't depart too much."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

> "There is a fascinating drift. Some people would say we are all on the same wavelength; other would say that there is no agreement. We do not have a democracy. Someone has to decide. There is not that much consensus but we are not seeking it."
>
> -- A managing editor, 1981

> "For the most part, the chosen few do agree pretty much, they think in the same terms."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

Journalists disagree on how much agreement exists within newsrooms, and their own news priorities are at odds with what they think their newspaper's priorities are.

Related to the issue of how today's journalists define news is the question of whether agreement exists within newsrooms on what is newsworthy. The in-depth interviews yielded a diversity of opinions. Some news people told us there is "substantial" consensus and "no great debates." Others said there are lots of disagreements, especially over emphasis given a story. One said they may nearly come to "fisticuffs" over the play stories receive. Another reported both lots of disagreements and consensus.

Reactions varied by location. At one newspaper we were told a consensus was only developing. At another, much greater agreement was perceived, in large part because top management has made its philosophy known. At a third, a consensus was rejected as a goal.

Perceptions also differed by position. Senior editors were more likely to report that a broad consensus exists. Those at lower ranks were likely to perceive greater similarity of views among people at the top and less similarity between themselves and top management. Said one, "There is a generation gap in the paper." People also reported greater consensus within than across departments.

Survey results confirmed these divergences of opinion. Only a fourth believed their paper has a unified approach to news (an issue addressed later in the report) and only 19% thought the approach is in line with their own views. When asked whether others on the staff share their own personal definition of news, more than half believed reporters hold very or somewhat similar views and more than half believed supervisors have views similar to their own. However, 42% and 46%, respectively, were unsure or perceived dissimilarities. Less than a majority thought copy editors share their own views and 37% thought the publisher holds a similar news definition (see Table 1.6). Not surprisingly, supervisory personnel were more likely to perceive similarities with other supervisors than did those in lower ranks. By location, the only difference occurred on perceptions of copy editors.

Table 1.6

Statement	Percent: Similar (1 or 2)	In-Between (3)	Dissimilar (4 or 5)	Average
To what extent do you think each of the following share your definition of what is newsworthy? (1 = very similar definition, 5 = very different definition)				
reporters on the staff	58%	27%	16%	2.43
supervising editors	54%	24%	22%	2.54
copy editors	47%	32%	21%	2.62*
publisher	37%	38%	25%	2.85

* Results differed significantly across locations.

As another effort to assess commonality in news priorities, we compared news people's own priorities on news topics with what they thought their newspaper's priorities were. There were consistent disparities between one's own rankings and those attributed to the newspaper (see Table 1.7). The differences identify those categories of news journalists feel are receiving inadequate or excessive emphasis by their own paper. They show journalists desiring to give greater priority to enterprise, interpretive and analytic stories, as well as breaking news of local or international import, lifestyles and business coverage. The perception is that routine government and sensational news are overplayed and that newspapers are too influenced by what broadcast media cover.

Ironically, there were almost no differences between supervisory and non-supervisory personnel in their personal priority rankings, suggesting that greater consensus may exist than news people generally recognize.

One final effort to address shared news definitions involved asking those personally interviewed to rank order the news value of five stories

Table 1.7

News Categories for which Own Priority Exceeds Paper's	News Categories for which Paper's Priority is Believed to Exceed Own
Local news	News already reported by broadcast media
State news	Routine government news
International news	News of scandals and corruption
Breaking news	Service news columns (like Help columns)
Interpretive background stories	
Analysis of long-term social trends	
Investigative reports	
Features on people and lifestyles	
Business and finance coverage	

selected from the front section of the previous day's newspaper. Usually two stories were selected from the front page and a mix of national and local topics was included. The results again showed a lack of consensus. While agreement tended to be higher on the first- and fifth-ranked stories, the amount of disagreement still was surprising. Looking only at the stories that emerged as first-ranked at each of the eight locations, they received 80 first ranks, 37 second ranks, 21 third ranks, 11 fourth ranks and 3 last ranks--or almost as many non-first ranks as first ranks. Ranking on other stories varied more. (Table 1.8 shows the average rankings each location gave its stories. The standard deviation, which reflects the amount of variability in responses, is shown in parenthesis).

As one individual remarked, there is bound to be a lack of consensus because everyone's notion of what is newsworthy is so personal. That individual was right!

Table 1.8

Mean Rankings and Standard Deviations on Newsworthiness of Five Stories*

Location	Top-ranked Story	Second-ranked Story	Third-ranked Story	Fourth-ranked Story	Fifth-ranked Story
1	1.68 (1.11)	2.37 (1.34)	3.42 (1.26)	3.58 (1.12)	3.95 (0.97)
2	1.95 (1.00)	2.60 (1.54)	2.80 (1.20)	3.16 (0.93)	4.75 (0.55)
3	1.76 (0.93)	2.68 (1.31)	2.76 (1.16)	3.72 (1.24)	4.08 (1.19)
4	2.12 (1.05)	2.35 (1.42)	2.82 (1.33)	2.95 (1.23)	4.53 (0.72)
5	1.83 (0.87)	2.79 (1.35)	3.25 (2.15)	3.46 (1.21)	4.29 (1.12)
6	1.61 (0.84)	2.00 (1.24)	3.33 (0.84)	3.61 (0.85)	4.50 (0.98)
7	1.62 (0.83)	2.00 (0.96)	3.07 (0.91)	3.69 (1.06)	4.62 (0.62)
8	1.29 (0.61)	2.43 (1.09)	2.93 (1.07)	4.21 (0.80)	4.21 (0.80)

---

* The means for each location are the average rank, from 1 to 5, given each of the stories. Whichever story received the highest overall rank (the mean closest to 1) is listed as the "Top-ranked Story." Whichever story received the next highest rank in a given locale is listed second, and so forth. The closer the average rank is to 1, the more people that assigned the story a high priority; the closer the average rank is to 5, the more people that assigned the story low priority. The number in parenthesis under the rank is the standard deviation, which measures the amount of variability in responses. The higher the number, the greater the disagreement among respondents on what rank the story deserved. Total number of respondents completing the ranking task was 152.

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE JOURNALIST -- WITHOUT AND WITHIN

One of the issues that originally prompted study of newsroom attitudes and practices was the suspicion that the profession has begun to lose contact with its public. To address this possibility, the questionnaire posed several questions about journalists' interactions with each other and with non-journalists. The in-depth interviews also probed the nature of feedback from the public and news people's perceptions of their familiarity with the public. Interestingly, many of the insights into this issue came not from the pre-planned series of questions but from spontaneous comments permeating the interviews and informal conversations that took place.

Are Journalists Insulated from the Public?

> "News people keep to themselves too much. They don't know much about what people are experiencing or talking about. They just need more maturity."
>
> -- An assistant editor, 1981

> "We lose sight of the public's opinion because we spend so much time with journalists."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

The typical news person professes a desire for more familiarity and involvement with the public but limits initiatives to do so.

Journalists believe they mix frequently with the public (see Table 2.1). Three out of five said they have a lot of contact with "people in walks of life very different from my own" (an expected finding in a news-gathering profession), two-thirds reported that non-journalists ask their opinions about things in the news, and three-quarters disagreed with the statement that they rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.

But these responses don't tell the whole story. If one eliminates work-related contacts and public-initiated contacts about work-related topics, the degree of community integration appears to be much less. Far fewer people reported actually being involved with a variety of outside groups and activities than believe they should be: Only one-third reported such activity while nearly half thought it desirable. However, over a fourth believed they should not participate in community activities (a belief no doubt reinforced in some cases by company policy).

Less than half said they regularly seek out non-journalists' opinions about the news. Particularly telling are the high percentages of respondents who reported frequent or somewhat frequent socializing with other staff members and whose friendships center around co-workers or others in the newspaper industry. This pattern of frequent association with other news people is most true of those who have been in the industry less than three years (as might be expected).

Table 2.1

Communication Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
Non-journalists often ask my opinion about things in the news.	68%	18%	14%	3.81
I have a lot of contact with people in walks of life very different from my own.	62%	20%	18%	3.72
I think journalists should be involved with outside groups and activities.	46%	27%	27%	3.27
I regularly seek out non-journalists' opinions about the news.	46%	24%	30%	3.24
I socialize frequently with other members of the newspaper staff.	40%	23%	37%	3.03
I am involved with a variety of groups and people in the community.	35%	21%	44%	2.85
The majority of my friends are associated with the newspaper business in one way or another.	28%	21%	51%	2.60
I rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.	14%	11%	75%	1.97

* All agree/disagree statements are on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

These results are consistent with comments frequently made during the interviews that journalists' off-hours contacts are too often limited to other staffers, with little or no mixing in the community. Editors were particularly likely to report that "our people don't socialize in the community," but their own reported contacts appeared to be somewhat limited as well.

Socializing with peers is common among professional groups, but it may present a unique problem for news people if it contributes to reduced ties to the public they want to serve. One way to compensate for limited voluntary socializing is through feedback procedures at the newspaper. Accordingly, we asked interviewees how much feedback they receive from the public and whether they think the staff at their newspaper have a good feel for the readers.

Staffers in several newsrooms didn't agree on how much public feedback their newspaper receives, but the predominant opinion was that there is not enough. Quotes from one newspaper illustrate the mix of views:

> "There is very little contact between the news desk and the reader."
>
> "Reader response is extremely low--I'm delighted when I get a letter."
>
> "I can't go anywhere without hearing about the paper."
>
> "Not much (reader input). Sometimes it's a problem--I often don't know what they're thinking."
>
> "Mostly we get feedback through hearsay and letters to the editor."

The amount of reader input varied across newspapers and departments within newspapers. In some newsrooms, it is sought through in-paper questionnaires, readership surveys, focus groups or the presence of an ombudsman. In other places, feedback is more haphazard, taking the form of occasional phone calls or letters to the editor. In some cases, feedback is implicitly discouraged. Staff members at one location said phone calls in some departments are answered by clerks who are more inclined to pacify the caller than forward the information or criticism received.

In sum, some staffers feel more in touch with reader sentiment than others. But on the whole, the amount of systematic feedback into the newsroom appears to be, in the words of one, "a pathetically average amount."

However, even when there is a good deal of feedback, staffers said it has little impact on how the news is covered. Most expressed skepticism about the usefulness or validity of such reader input. Said one sports writer, "I'm not sure whether reader participation is the best guide of whether we have a good product."

The combination of the limited social contacts and lack of public feedback leaves many journalists feeling that they don't know their community or readers. The lament of one assistant editor--"Sometimes I think I am completely out of touch"--captured a frustration expressed by many. That feeling showed, too, in the number of news people who complained they had difficulty completing that portion of the questionnaire asking them to estimate specific reader attitudes or habits. Some said it was an "unfair test" because they had no idea what proportion of adult readers are interested in various topics or who their readers are demographically. Yet they were equally likely to denigrate one of the few systematic means available to them of learning about their readers, namely readership surveys.

Some top managers--editors, publishers, managing editors and assistant managing editors--believed their staffs know their communities. A typical remark: "Collectively we do a pretty good job, we're right on target." But this optimistic assessment is not borne out by the admissions of many reporters and desk editors nor by the survey data. As the next section and subsequent sections on perceptions of readers reveal, a fair number of journalists think they and their colleagues are too removed from their communities, that they are insufficiently familiar with their public's values, needs and interests. And a fair number attribute to others, or themselves express, elitist attitudes that foster separation from the public.

What are Causes, Effects and Solutions to Insularity?

> "Especially the younger reporters are getting removed from society. They come from different backgrounds than the average public. (Theirs is) a snobbish view of the world."
>
> -- An assistant ME, 1981
>
> "It's a settlement problem. Reporters come in and talk down to the residents. This is a problem at any paper. Turnover is the problem. Pay is the problem... If you want to get settled people, you're going to have to pay."
>
> -- An editor, 1981
>
> "There is an elitist view among reporters."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

Mobility, long working hours and an attitude that news people are different from their readers contribute to journalists feeling out of touch.

One reason given for news people's distance from the public is that many believe they are attitudinally and socio-economically different from the public at large. Whether or not they actually are, the perception fosters a disdain for the public that surfaced in many discussions. As one cynic put it, "If 27,000 people are doing (something), they must be wrong." Even the disclaimer by one respondent that "the readers are not the great unwashed" ironically underscored that such an attitude had been expressed by others.

A second cause mentioned by many was time pressures. News people reported working very long hours and feeling barely able to keep up with the "information overload." Their description of their job as very demanding and endless fits with this concern. The resultant reduction in available time for socializing necessarily limits opportunities to participate in community activities or mingle with the public. A popular bar near one newspaper offers a convenient social outlet for those with time to socialize, but perhaps at the expense of contact with the public.

A third factor is mobility, which takes two forms: geographic and organizational. Geographically, movement from location to location is frequent and seems encouraged by news people, especially at group newspapers. Reporters and editors spoke of career planning sessions with their supervisors that called for changing locations, in some cases as often as every 18 months. Some said turnover was budgeted (a claim denied by senior management), and some pointed to salary structures designed to penalize stability by bestowing the greatest incremental raises on newcomers. The net result is less integration into or familiarity with the local community.

The second kind of mobility is "upward mobility," or advancement within the status hierarchy. Several interviewees mentioned an increasing preoccupation among journalists with career advancement, which is reinforced by management. Said one, "There are always a number of reporters on the make."

This kind of mobility encourages insularity as well. The survey showed that those people most likely to evidence insularity (as indicated by their lesser reported community involvement and/or more socializing within the organization) are reporters, those in the industry less time and those at their present job less than three years. This means that those who have most recently moved to a new location or been promoted to a new job are least likely to have a network of friendships and contacts in the community. It is not surprising that new reporters are less likely to be well-integrated into the community, but that doesn't negate the problem of their lack of knowledge of the community. Of greater concern should be the insularity of those advancing at a rapid pace within organizations. One could surmise that career advancement is better served by being well-connected within the organization than within the community.

A further analysis of what contributes to insularity explored the relationship of the journalists' reports of their communication practices and such factors as demographic characteristics, job attitudes and media habits. As Table 2.2 reveals, the most important factors related to fewer contacts in the community are, in rank order: age, magazine readership, readership of one's own newspaper, perceived similarity with the reader, image of one's paper on sensationalism, and image of one's paper on such attributes as timeliness, accuracy, respect and vigilance. Those who are younger, read fewer magazines, read their own paper less thoroughly, see themselves as dissimilar to their readers, and hold a more favorable image of their newspaper have the fewest community contacts. (The relationships between these variables and insularity are not particularly close, however. Other considerations also influence community involvement.)

A somewhat different profile exists for those who interact frequently with colleagues (See Table 2.3). Again, the biggest factor is age: Younger people are more likely to report socializing and friendships with other journalists. Additionally, frequent communication with co-workers is most common among those who are upwardly mobile (as evidenced through the relationships with raises, promotions and recent moves to a new job), who are newer to the profession, who have greater exposure to and favorable attitudes toward professional literature, who feel a greater kinship with their supervisors, who are more satisfied with many aspects of their work environment, and who are more pessimistic about newspaper readership in their community. It is not surprising that such people are more favorable about many facets of their job and hold a positive image of their newspaper. Unfortunately, like those

Table 2.2

Predictors of Isolation from the Community, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
1. Age	As age decreases, insularity increases; those in the 25-34 age bracket are most insular.	-.11
2. Magazine consumption	As number of magazines read monthly increases, insularity decreases.	-.12
3. Reading of own paper	As thoroughness of reading one's own paper decreases, insularity increases.	-.12
4. Similarity with reader	As perceptions of dissimilarity with the reader increase, insularity increases.	.14
5. Sensationalism image	Those who hold a more favorable image of their paper on sensationalism (seeing it as nonsensational) are more insular.	.10
6. Competence and trust image	Those who hold a more favorable image of their paper on accuracy, timeliness, personalism, respect and vigilance are more insular.	.09
7. Location	Newsrooms differed on the amount of insularity reported by their staff.	.11

Overall $R^2 = .10$ (corrected for shrinkage, $R^2 = .08$)
Overall F due to regression = 6.77, df = 7, 432, $p < .001$

who have more limited community involvement, they tend to hold less critical views of their own newspaper.

The problems that result from journalists remaining aloof from the public were noted by various news people: inability to establish and cultivate trusted sources; failure to recognize events, people and issues that are locally newsworthy; increased homogeneity of perspectives in the newsroom, with a concomitant loss of ability for self-correction; subtle shifts in writing focus to please peers or themselves rather than a well-defined public; and possibly the most pernicious, a deepening mistrust of the public the journalist is supposed to serve.

Table 2.3

Predictors of Frequent Socializing with Other Journalists, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
1. Age	As age decreases, socializing with colleagues increases; those in the 25-34 age bracket have the most interaction with other journalists.	-.08
2. Promotion	Those who have been promoted more than once in the last two years communicate more often with colleagues.	.16
3. Years in job	The longer a person has held his/her current job, the less communication with colleagues.	-.15
4. Raises	Those who have received a raise in the last two years engage in more communication with co-workers.	.10
5. Readership of professional publications	As the number of professional publications read increases, the amount of communication with co-workers increases.	.11
6. Reading of own paper	As thoroughness of reading one's own paper increases, communication with colleagues increases.	.11
7. Years in industry	Those people who have been in the industry less than three years communicate more often with other journalists.	-.11
8. Knowledge of research	As belief that one's own newspaper values and uses research increases, communication with co-workers increases.	.09
9. Work satisfaction	As satisfaction with work increases, interaction with colleagues increases.	.08
10. Attitudes toward technology	As favorability of attitudes toward electronic news processing technology increases, amount of communication with co-workers increases.	.24
11. Image	As perceptions of one's newspaper as personal, lively and interesting increase, amount of communication with colleagues increases.	.08
12. Estimate of public newspaper readership	As one's estimate of how many people in the community read the newspaper decreases, communication with co-workers increases.	-.14

Table 2.3 (Con.)

Predictors of Frequent Socializing with Other Journalists, in Rank Order

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized beta weight
13. Location	Newsrooms differed on the amount of communication taking place among staffers (three differed significantly).	.17 -.16 .15

Overall $R^2 = .35$ (corrected for shrinkage, $R^2 = .32$)
Overall F due to regression = 15.09, df = 15, 424, $p < .001$

Some news people offered solutions. One was to encourage greater community participation. This approach was echoed at three different newspapers:

> "The greatest personal challenge is to get out of the newsroom and get a feel for the community. It is important not to impose our views on (this community)."
>
> "As an editor, I am trying to get people involved in the community, to socialize more with the community and less with their colleagues."
>
> "As an editor, I need to get out to see what's happening."

Such activity, however, cannot be legislated, especially as 25% believe involvement might jeopardize objectivity and some newspapers have policies barring certain kinds of participation. As one reporter commented, it can be a problem to join an organization about which one might sometime have to write a story. This concern for maintaining one's professional distance and impartiality was often the reason given for limited mixing in the community. The question to be raised is whether it becomes too easy an excuse.

A second set of recommendations revolved around the mobility issue. They included less pressure to move and an altered reward structure that permits talented reporters to remain reporters rather than feeling forced to advance to a desk job. General improvements in salaries were also mentioned. One reporter complained that on his low salary, he couldn't afford to do much else than have a glass of beer with a co-worker when he was off duty.

Low salaries and pressures to move were also sometimes cited as turning the profession into a single-person's occupation. It was argued that people with families find it increasingly difficult to remain in the profession.

Interestingly, people at larger newspapers thought the issue was more serious at those newspapers than at smaller ones. Said one respondent, "That's not much of a problem at small papers where people have been in the community a long time. We (here) are all talking about our careers and where we're going next. I would like to see people settle down more." Yet it was often the people at smaller papers who expressed the greatest concern about turnover. They said they have lower pay scales, their positions may be regarded as less prestigious and they have a higher probability of their newspaper being treated as a training ground or brief stopover for upwardly mobile people in newspaper groups.

While there was a fair amount of sentiment favoring reduced pressure to move, there was also recognition that some turnover is healthy: "Bringing new people in provides a good mix. People may be better able to ask tough questions, to take new approaches. But there is a danger of losing touch with the community." Some balance was called for, but where that balance should be struck was not readily apparent.

Other institutionalized solutions to insularity that were proposed or had been adopted included greater reliance on readership research, more systematic solicitations of reader opinion and criticism, the formation of readership committees and the addition of an ombudsman to the staff. (Current attitudinal resistance toward readership research is addressed elsewhere in this report. As we argue there, research that provides greater knowledge of readers will not be a viable solution unless journalists come to be more trusting of such data and to have greater access to it.) Other ways of seeking reader opinion, such as in-paper questionnaires or focus groups may offer some useful insights but are limited by the nonrepresentativeness of those who participate.

The ombudsman is also not uniformly welcomed. At the one location where there is an ombudsman, some critics complained about the person not being bland enough, siding too often with the public, requiring corrections to be displayed too prominently and making reporters feel that they were being watched. These criticisms reflected a desire not to be accountable to the public or to have to admit errors. The favorable endorsements of the ombudsman role and the credibility it was perceived to bring the paper did outweigh negative comments. Even so, a single individual in such a role, or a small committee addressing readership issues, cannot be regarded as a substitute for broad-based awareness of community values, habits and interests. The insularity problem, then, must be seen as one of the major issues raised by this study and a particularly complex one because of the many factors contributing to it.

How do Journalists Communicate Within the Newsroom?

> "There is not enough discussion between the editor and reporter about what's going on and where the stories are going. There are just hurried shouts."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981
>
> "It's been a long time (since) I worked anywhere else but there is a lack of communication around here."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981
>
> "We may not have enough discussion with enough people, so it becomes difficult to identify standards both at the reporter and editor level."
>
> -- An assistant managing editor, 1931

These quotes, coming from three different levels within the newsroom and from three different locations, capture the prevailing opinions about the adequacy of communication taking place within the typical newsroom. News people enjoy talking with each other and would like to spend more time discussing their newspaper with their bosses.

It is not so much that there is too little interaction taking place -- in fact, in some locations quite the opposite was reported -- but rather that the nature of the interactions and who they are with are key concerns.

In terms of sheer quantitiy, a majority of respondents (56%) reported interacting frequently with co-workers about their stories; somewhat fewer (47%) reported having frequent interaction with supervisors. The averages, shown in table 2.4, indicate an intermediate degree of task-related discussion occurring. Results varied significantly by location, position and department.

Table 2.4

Communication Statements* Percent:	Agree	In-Between	Disagree	Average
My co-workers frequently discuss their stories with me.	56%	26%	18%	3.54**
My editor and I frequently discuss the content of various stories.	47%	22%	31%	3.23**
I seek out information from bulletin boards, memos, and other internal communications to find out what's happening at the paper.	80%	11%	9%	4.12**
When I have a problem, I generally seek out my immediate supervisor.	58%	16%	28%	3.50**

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Results differed significantly across locations.

Smaller newspapers tended to report greater communication, althought this is not a consistent pattern. Within papers, reporters, those who have been in their present position less than three years and those in features and sports departments tended to claim more frequent discussions. Attitudinally, those who feel more similar to their supervisors also reported more frequent discussions within the newsroom.

News people uniformly agreed that they rely on memos, bulletin board notices and the like to learn what is happening at their paper.

Comments from the in-depth interviews supported the variability in the amount of conversation taking place. It was not uncommon for the same newsroom to produce reports both of very little and a great deal of communication occurring. For example, one managing editor, when asked how much discussion takes place in the newsroom about what should and should not be investigated or reported, replied, "Barrels of it." Others in the same newsroom said it was insufficient.

What became apparent as these inconsistencies were probed was that while a fair amount of interaction took place among peers, both the amount and quality of interactions across levels of the organization were below what news professionals desire. Even though a plurality (47%) said they frequently talk with a supervisor, a sizable 31% reported that such interaction is lacking. Moreover, the limited amount of serious discussion between reporters and editors was a frequently voiced concern in the interviews. In particular, people at all eight locations said they rarely get explanations for decisions on assignments, story publication, story display and editing changes. Any explanations usually must be requested. While people volunteered that there is seldom time for such discussions, the result is still frustration. One person even spoke of turmoil resulting when reasons are not known.

A related complaint was lack of guidance from managers as to the newspaper's goals and priorities. At one location, there was a call for more complementary interaction between management and staff because,it was said, there is a gap between reporters and the managing editor. At another paper, some staffers said they thought there were still some sacred cows that could not be covered by their paper, but that they only knew that through the grapevine. Management at that newspaper of course disagreed that there were any, but it was apparent that such an attitude had not been transmitted to the staff. At a third location, a reporter told us that "if there is any consensus from editors, it has not been communicated to us." Two of the opening quotes came from two other locations and a copy editor at a sixth complained about too many layers of management preventing adequate interaction across levels. In fact, only one newspaper's staff seemed to feel relatively confident that its paper's news philosophy and standards had been communicated to them.

This problem is not unrecognized by management. One senior editor told us, "It is the fault of all of us who supervise." Others acknowledged that lack of explanations can be a problem, but they were inclined to think that explanations are given when appropriate. One newspaper, in an effort to provide greater opportunity for staff to give and receive feedback, instituted a monthly senior staff meeting to which the staff routinely sent representatives. Reporters and editors alike had some criticisms about the way it was working, but it at least represented a concrete mechanism for cross flow of information and opinions.

In addition to wanting more feedback and guidance, junior staffers also complained about having too little input into the decision-making process. While most reporters conceded that a lot of informal discussion takes place and that they have a lot of say about what stories they personally cover, they seemed to want more formalized opportunities for influencing news decisions. Attending budget meetings, having frequent departmental meetings, or having periodic planning sessions did not automatically assure greater feelings of influence.

Staffers might clamor for a greater role no matter what management attempted, but some of the existing mechanisms may also be too sporadic to be satisfying or may not actually allow reporters to voice an opinion (as in the case of attending budget meetings). At least at present, there are some who feel that the staff is not consulted enough about what goes into the paper.

Finally, a few complaints about supervisor communication patterns centered on overcommunication among editors themselves, excessive reliance on unproductive staff meetings, and overuse of memos as a means of communicating with reporters. In one location where all three problems were mentioned, we were told about a group of assistant editors spending far more time in planning meetings than was necessary or useful, having concomitantly less time to spend with their subordinates and sending out floods of memos. Given the cry elsewhere for more formalized discussion vehicles and greater feedback from supervisors, such complaints leave sincerely concerned managers with conflicting messages about how to behave. But this latter set of complaints at least signals that intended correctives can also go awry. It also suggests that reporters would be happier if they were included in the planning sessions and that face-to-face communication is preferred over written memoranda.

Despite junior staffers' negative comments about the level of their involvement, most reporters and assistant editors believe they can freely approach their supervisor when they have a problem or want explanations. A majority (58%) stated that they seek out their immediate supervisor when they have a problem (although more than a quarter said they did not). Most interviewees said they could ask why their stories were edited or not published and they would get an answer. Most also described their first-line supervisors as very approachable and receptive. Almost no one felt intimidated about criticizing their newspaper or voicing opinions to their editors. Said one, "You can tell your boss he's full of it."

In fact, many papers provided opportunities for frank exchanges. In One place, it is a monthly critique and gripe session. In another, it is the use of the nearby bar to receive blunt feedback from the bosses and to express one's own criticisms in return. This airing of complaints is one healthy aspect of a relatively free flow of communication from subordinate to supervisor. It is definitely not the practice in a lot of organizations and professions.

As for communication among peers, it has already been noted that a sizable amount occurs within levels. Not all of this is regarded positively, however. In half the locations, we heard comments about much of the informal conversation being unfocused, unproductive, and devoted to gossip, bitching or discussions behind editors' backs. This kind of social interaction naturally occurs in any organization and should not be taken as a sign that journalists are uniquely petty or gossip-prone. All it does is temper an overly favorable interpretation of the amount of communication that is taking place.

A larger concern is the frequency with which people complained about the increasingly competitive atmosphere within the newsroom. While journalism is by nature a competitive activity and competition can be healthy, too much can undermine organizational morale and productivity. The number of snide remarks about the "chosen few," people being on the make, the political people being most vocal in decision-making, and upwardly mobile individuals ingratiating themselves to those most likely to next move into supervisory roles suggested that a conflictual rather than colleagial climate is developing within some newsrooms. At one location where such comments were particularly frequent, we heard the following:

> "It is very competitive within the newsroom, which becomes dangerous. It is cutthroat. It is ironic that it tries to cover compassion written by reporters who would kill... Advancement is a disease."

This same person went on to say that he thought it was probably worse at other papers and that the blame could be laid in part on journalism school and in part on corporate structure, which doesn't allow people to be individuals and brings with it office politics. Others voiced similar concerns about "new journalists," who were said to be too assertive, often with the blessing of management, and to come out of journalism school modeling themselves after Joe Rossi, thinking they have to be hard-nosed and hurt someone to get ahead. These comments, coupled with the concerns expressed about the profession increasingly becoming a young, single person's profession, all contributed to the impression of an overly competitive, politically charged communication environment, where at least some energies are diverted away from news-gathering and editing and toward solidifying one's standing with higher-ups in the status hierarchy.

As some noted, what is likely to suffer is the product. The question for managers is whether undue emphasis is being placed on career advancement to the detriment of cooperative, amicable working relations among peers and at the expense of professional dedication to the organization's overriding responsibility, producing an accurate, timely, enterprising and thorough newspaper.

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE JOURNALIST

The leadership style and the decision-making process within a newsroom significantly affect what kind of news product it creates. So does employee satisfaction with the job. The next series of questions explored what kind of work environment currently exists and what journalists would prefer.

Who's in Charge?

> "The editors decide what merits coverage and the assistant managing editor decides what gets in. It boils down to a consensus among the editors."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "This paper could be characterized as 'management by committee'."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "God knows where decisions come from. There are strong-willed editors at the paper, but it seems as though their influence is sporadic and inconsistent."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "The days of the managing editor chewing on a cigar and saying, 'that's the way it's going to be' are long gone."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

Leadership in newsrooms ranges from laissez-faire to authoritarian, with reporters having considerable control over what gets covered.

If one were to simply judge who runs today's newsrooms based on the descriptions given of the daily decision-making process, one would conclude that editors exercise great control. This is because of their prominence in daily budget decisions. Here are some illustrative descriptions of the process:

> "The executive editors and managing editors decide at the budget meeting on a day-to-day basis."

> "The executive editor sets the agenda with the city editor. The copy desk and the managing editor make decisions on play."

> "The managing editor sets the tone and pace, second level editors have a lot of influence and desk people generate assignments, assign priorities. Editors do a lot of talking out of priorities at the budget meeting."

> "The 2 p.m. (budget) meeting is a critique and planning session, and later meetings are held to coordinate and guide by general policies (those) ideas that are developed at the staff meeting."

But the reporters also play a very influential role, for the story ideas usually originate with them. One managing reporter said that "90 to 95% of the ideas begin with reporters." Another editor said that it is reporters "who know what's going on day-to-day. Editors look at long range trends. The editor doesn't know what's going on on the street." Most reporters agreed, saying they inform their supervisors about the stories they are writing and the supervisors either approve or disapprove.

The amount of reporter influence differed from location to location, however. Reporters at one newspaper told us, "This is a reporter's paper. I can write anything I want. Reporters make the decisions and that's what makes or breaks the paper." At another location, they said they "wouldn't call this a reporter's paper; it's a 50/50 split." But almost everyone said that whatever they write gets into the paper.

Questionnaire results confirmed that reporters have considerable freedom in deciding what stories to cover, in planning their work on a daily basis and in exercising their creativity. As Table 3.1 indicates, seven out of ten respondents reported considerable freedom for individual decision-making, with little interference from supervisors. Supervisors consistently reported more freedom for themselves than did reporters, as might be expected. By location, the only difference that appeared was on supervisors insisting that decisions be left to them: The averages ranged from 1.95 to 2.72, indicating that news people at all locations disagreed with the statement, and at some more strongly than at others.

Table 3.1

Work Freedom Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
My supervisor allows me extensive freedom to plan and organize my work.	71%	14%	15%	3.83
My supervisor insists that I stick to my job and leave decisions and planning to him/her.	20%	16%	64%	2.36*
My supervisor always insists that I solve my own work problems, but is available to advise me if I should need it.	39%	31%	30%	3.13

*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
*Results differed significantly across locations.

While journalists across the board reported extensive freedom in their own day-to-day work assignments, reports of management's control of the newspaper's daily decision-making varied widely across locations. Several journalists told us their paper was run by "a triumvirate," "a troika" or "the gang of four." Some, through their comments, revealed an authoritarian or bureaucratic management style:

> "Things that sift down become 'musts'."
>
> "The news editor runs it as a fiefdom."
>
> "There are too many chiefs. As a result, too many things fall through the cracks and people become territorial. There is less communication among the legs of management structure."
>
> "It's 'macho editing'. There is too much time spent by managers on production. There is no time for planning."
>
> "Management spends too much time jousting with... windmills."

The concern with excessive bureaucracy was especially likely to surface in group-owned newspapers. It was said that corporate structure may provide an abundance of leadership, but leadership that may be too oriented to bureaucratic detail and to form over substance.

At one location, this translated into complaints about managers being "meeting happy." One sub-editor characterized the focus of management at this particular paper as an emphasis on "process rather than product." A reporter likewise noted that "daily staff meetings are important to the brass."

Other locations reported a more democratic style:

> "It works better here with low-key people at the top. We don't have the person who comes down hard on you. People have respect for each other."

And yet in other locations, a more laissez-faire style was in evidence but not welcomed:

> "Reporters are pretty much in charge of what gets covered. Maybe news execs need to ride herd more, question, direct, challenge."

> "We need someone at the top to motivate people to be more enterprising. The future of the newspaper is in enterprise. ... We're not pushed enough."

One reply to the question of who runs the paper--"It depends on the position of the earth."--captured well the frustration expressed by many with a nondirective or inconsistent leadership style.

When news people were asked what leadership style they would prefer, they generally expressed a preference for a cross between an authoritarian and democratic style with managers providing leadership, guidance and quality control. Reporters said they did not want "wishy-washy" management. They wanted "flexibility and the opportunity to be self-starters" but also a strong editor who sets priorities without "dulling up the tools."

Essentially, they indicated a need for a "presence" to be created by managers who are committed to editorial excellence. Many expressed concern that inadequate emphasis is placed on quality at present. Said one, "Its easy for an editor to fall into just filling the paper, but lose touch with the product." Another commented, "The role of the copy editor should be improved. It is a potentially important position that is underutilized." Concern was also expressed by some that group papers are not committed to quality: "There is too much emphasis on quantity rather than quality in a chain paper," said one.

News people indicated a need for more leadership and communication of editorial policy from all levels of supervision, not just top management. As was said, it is "needed at each department level. Consistency comes with good leadership at all levels." "(It) shouldn't be up to one very strong individual to chart the course of the paper. We need a cross-section of consistant leadership." But especially important seemed to be a "definition from the top," guidelines or policies on what is valued.

In the same vein, reporters expressed a need for greater feedback and criticism of their work. "We need teachers." "We need a better dialogue between editors and reporters to press for details, fine-tuning, to keep stuff from being pushed through." "We want to know what's expected. We want someone (as editor) who is a facilitator and gives help." Many reporters expressed dismay at being ignored.

Interestingly, John McMillan, publisher of the Salem Statesman-Journal, heard similar remarks in his discussions with journalists in eight newsrooms in the west:

> "I want to learn. But no one teaches me anything. It's a wonderful job, a great assignment. But no one edits a word I write. I crave help."
>
> "Praise is too loosely given and criticism too rarely given. It's the I'm okay, you're okay school of journalism." (As quoted in the January 1982 issue of the Gannetteer.)

Across locations, there was almost a schizophrenia about the preferences for the management style which would work best. At those papers where an authoritarian leadership style was prevalent, journalists typically expressed a desire for a more democratic structure. "Too strong an editor makes work difficult and can have an intimidating influence which can kill stories." Of course, the opposite was true for those currently operating under a democratic leadership style. "A strong editor is respected if he or she has good news sense. I do not want to work for a wimp." It seems that an editor must be both firm and lenient simultaneously. Whether or not this idealized leadership is possible, is a moot question. The reporters know what they want. "I respect a strong editor, but like one who's laid back."

One paper appears to have arrived at a system resembling the ideal, at least according to the journalists who work there. The tone is reflected in the following statement. "What is news is very subjective -- given that, it's not the same as other work environments -- it argues for more leadership at the top. The process in the end is not democratic." As at other papers, initiation of story ideas typically started with the reporters. Then, at the budget meeting, decisions were made on play. However, this paper was set apart from the others in that "management has made it clear what their product is and how they have arrived at their decisions." Reporters said they have the freedom they want, but have "like minds in key positions to provide consistent leadership" and journalistic guidance to alleviate the ambiguity which leads to conflict and dissatisfaction.

It is also interesting to note that this particular paper had a high regard for readership surveys. "We use findings of readership surveys to decide on the types of stories we cover." "We use it as one more plug into the story." "Surveys have confirmed our gut feeling." Apparently, research is a key ingredient in the formulation of guidelines at this paper.

Do Newsrooms Have a Unified News Policy?

> "There is no sense on the staff of where we're going. (I have a) feeling we're improving, but we don't know what we're trying to be--investigative, regional, state...."
>
> --A writer, 1981
>
> "There is a reluctance at the top to tell people no--they're afraid to prioritize because it will upset someone."
>
> --A desk editor, 1981
>
> "There are all sorts of policies and rules of thumb for trivia but no policy on major news stories."
>
> --An assistant managing editor, 1981
>
> "It should not be a mystery how I view news."
>
> --A managing editor, 1981

Most journalists do not believe their paper has an identifiable or consistent news policy. Those who do are more likely to see supervisors and readers as "like minds."

Journalists who were interviewed were asked if their paper has any policies that define what is newsworthy. No one reported the presence of one. Some said there was "no discernible policy," some said that it is "informal if there is one," and some said there was a "shared awareness."

Some managers believe implicit guidelines exist that are well-understood, but apparently this is not a widely shared view. Only one-fourth of the journalists who completed the questionnaire feel their newspaper has a unified editorial approach and even fewer believe their paper's policy reflects their views. Supervisory and nonsupervisory personnel did not differ in their attitudes on these questions. Both reported a lack of editorial unity and a disparity between their personal views and those of the newspaper. Their findings parallel those on the news priorities--agreement across ranks but the perception that one's own views differ from those of the organization (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Editorial Policy*	Percent: Agree	In-Between	Disagree	Average
This paper has a unified editorial approach.	25%	28%	47%	2.64**
The editorial policy of this paper usually reflects my views.	19%	32%	49%	2.51**
Similarity of Values*				
My superiors in this newspaper share my values.	36%	29%	35%	2.92
My superiors think like me.	30%	31%	39%	2.77**

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Results differed significantly across locations.

Journalists often have access to information and experiences not commonly shared with one another. This difference in frame of reference can cause conflicting viewpoints about editorial policy and the values which journalists assume. Journalists are equally divided in their opinions about whether or not their superiors share their values or think like they do. Approximately one-third felt they had values or thoughts similar to those of their superiors. Another third disagreed, and one third were undecided.

To explore this issue, we analyzed what factors contribute to perceptions of a unified editorial approach and of shared values among supervisors and subordinates. The results, summarized in Table 3.3, provide some intriguing insights.

Those journalists who perceive their newspapers as having a unified editorial approach and a shared value system are those who fall into the 25-34 year old age group, read their own paper more thoroughly, and hold a positive image of their paper as timely, involved in the community, influential and accurate. These journalists also spend more time reading other professional journals.

Top management and desk supervisors are more likely to feel that there is unity of approach at their newspapers than are reporters. And, as one would expect, those people who are experiencing conflict with their supervisors are less likely to hold perceptions of similarity of values. We also found location differences, primarily due to the size of the paper. Journalists who work at smaller papers feel they have more shared values and a more unified approach than those at the larger papers.

Knowledge of research is related: newspapers that encourage the use and dissemination of readership findings experience greater unity of editorial approach. (Here is further support for the paper described earlier that uses research findings to help formulate news values.) If journalists perceive that the readers hold values similar to their own, they are also more likely to view their editorial approach as unified.

Job mobility also plays a role. Journalists who have been promoted and who have held their current jobs for less than three years are more likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values and to approach the news in a similar fashion. This finding is consistent with the notion of insularity in communication patterns discussed previously. Those individuals who are upwardly mobile are likely to communicate more with management. This contact adds to their identification with the leadership, and consequently, their positive evaluation of editorial policies.

The absence of explicit editorial policies appears to have an impact on whether newspapers are more "reactive"--responding to daily events as they occur--or "proactive"--taking initiative in anticipating stories and making investigative assignments. Interviewees were asked whether they felt their paper as a whole was reactive or proactive in its approach to news-gathering. The responses from editors and reporters alike paralleled the comments about laissez-faire leadership style and lack of guidelines. Most journalists described their papers as reactive and attributed much of the reactivity to lack of direction and lack of time for planning.

Table 3.3

Predictors of a Unified Editorial Approach/Shared Value System

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
1. Promotions*	If journalists have been promoted in the past 2 yrs., perceived unity of editorial approach and similarity of values increases.	-.25
2. Size of Paper*	Smaller papers perceive more unity in editorial approach and more shared values among supervisors and subordinates.	-.11
3. Reporters	Reporters are least likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values.	-.20
4. Desk editors	Editors are more likely to perceive that their supervisors share their values.	.17
5. Knowledge of Research	The greater the dissemination of research findings, the higher the perceived unity of editorial approach and similarity of values.	.13
6. Reading habits of journalists*	The more journalists read their own paper, the more likely they are to perceive a unified editorial approach and a shared value system.	-.09
7. Supervisor/ Subordinate Conflict	The more conflict among supervisors and subordinates, the less likely journalists are to perceive a unified editorial approach or similarity of values.	-.24
8. Perceived Similarity of Reader	As journalists perceive themselves as more similar to their readers, the more likely they are to perceive a unified editorial approach and that their superiors share their values.	.20
9. Years in Job	If journalists have held their present job 3 yrs. or less, they are more likely to perceive a more unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.11
10. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their paper to be more personal and involved in the community, they are more likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.28

Table 3.3 cont.

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
11. Reading Habits of Journalists	As journalists read *more* professional journals, they are *more* likely to perceive their own paper as having a unified editorial approach and a shared value system.	.09
12. Sensationalism	As journalists perceive their papers to be *less* sensationalist, they are *more* likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.17
13. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own paper to be *more* timely, accurate and influential, they are *more* likely to perceive a unified editorial approach and shared value system.	.19
14. Location	There are location differences in perceptions of unity of editorial approach and similarity of values.	.11
15. Age	Journalists aged 25-34 are *more* likely to perceive a unifed editorial approach and shared value system.	.08

Overall $R^2 = .45$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .44)
Overall F due to regression = 29.49, df = 12, 427, $p < .001$

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* These predictors were entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed The regession coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

This was especially true at the smaller papers. One respondent said, "The reactive approach is due to the attitudes of management--'don't bother' and our small staff size." Others spoke of inordinate time pressures that did not permit taking a more proactive stance. One smaller paper did indicate movement toward being more proactive: "Our move away from being reactive is caused by a new city desk and young reporters."

The larger papers tended to report a greater degree of initiative or progress in that direction. One location characterized itself as having become

50/50 between reactive and proactive after years of being strictly reactive. But there was still a recognized need to be more enterprising and anticipatory of news developments. Other locations told us that "reporters and editors both dig up stories." Because no one can cover all the bases at the larger locations, we were told that everyone becomes more aggressive to ensure that "nothing gets left out."

Those journalists who characterized the news-gathering at their papers as a more balanced approach usually explained it as a dichotomy. "Reporters are proactive and editors, reactive--at least that's how the reporters see it."

How Much Conflict is There Between Supervisors and Staff?

> "If the person above me were generating ideas without forcing, I'd be twice as effective."
>
> --A desk editor, 1981
>
> "We need a little more adversarial relationship, more 'punches in the jaw.' Everyone is too nice."
>
> --A section editor, 1981
>
> "I give reporters too much rank. They know a whole lot more. I encourage editors to listen to reporters."
>
> --A managing editor, 1981
>
> "I'm aware of my role and aware when I do a poor job. All managers try not to overmanage."
>
> --A managing editor, 1981
>
> "In all hierarchies, over the years there is a tendency to appoint people who are pliable or mediocre, people who will not oppose, who will be loyal and easy to work with. It results in people not fit for the job."
>
> --A reporter, 1981
>
> "Ideas from the top stink."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

Even though a minority of journalists in nonsupervisory roles believe their supervisors are similar to them, the perceived dissimilarity doesn't translate into conflict.

As noted in the previous section, only a third of the respondents perceive their supervisors think like them and share their values. One might, therefore, expect some friction between supervisors and subordinates. To probe this aspect of working relationships between news staffers and their supervisors, the survey asked respondents to assess whether they experience conflicts between their own views of how their work should be done and demands placed on them by others.

The results, presented in Table 3.4, reveal that only about a third felt they have a hard time satisfying conflicting demands from people they work with. Over half disagreed. As for conflicts with supervisors specifically, about as many (38%) said they differ with their supervisor on how things should be done as said they do not differ (36%). Results were similar across all locations.

Table 3.4

Role Conflict*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
I have a hard time satisfying the conflicting demands of people I work with.	33%	16%	51%	2.66
There is a difference between the way my supervisor thinks things should be done and the way I think they should be done.	38%	26%	36%	3.03

---

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

We conducted further analyses to determine what accounts for differing levels of role conflict. Roles reflect expectations that individuals have about the way in which an occupant of a position should behave. When two people's expectations about how one or the other should behave differ substantially, there is role conflict. In the case of a supervisor and subordinate, differing perceptions of how the subordinate should carry out his or her job has implications for organizational effectiveness, as well as for the working relationship between the two individuals. In general, past research indicates that employees who experience role conflict are rated lower in performance and report lower levels of job satisfaction than those persons who are exposed to little or no role conflict.

The data support these conclusions (Table 3.5). When we analyzed what contributes to favorable supervisor/subordinate relations,[1] we found that if subordinates perceived their supervisors as similar in goals and values, conflict was low. Overall, those individuals who experience the greatest conflict tend to be more pessimistic about their paper, seeing it as declining in quality and influence and as losing its readers. Consistent with negative effects of job mobility, individuals who have not been promoted experience greater conflict.

As with shared values with supervisors, newspapers disseminating research have fewer reported conflicts. However, contrary to the similarity results, journalists who perceive themselves as similar to their readers report greater conflict with supervisors. One could speculate that journalists who are experiencing alienation within their own organizations will tend to identify with the dissatisfied reader, focusing blame for deficiencies on the newspaper and its management.

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[1] Our measure of supervisor/subordinate conflict combined the two items in Table 3.3 on role conflict plus two items from Table 3.1. The items were combined based on factor analysis results and represent compatibility in the supervisor/subordinate work relationship.

Table 3.5

Predictors of Supervisor/Subordinate Conflict

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weights
1. Promotions*	Journalists who have been promoted in the past 2 years, perceive less supervisor/subordinate conflict.	-.13
2. Knowledge of* Research	As the paper encourages dissemination of research, perceived conflict between supervisors and subordinates decreases.	-.12
3. Shared Values with Supervisor	As subordinates perceive their supervisors to hold similar views, perceived conflict decreases.	-.32
4. Reader Satisfaction	As perceived reader satisfaction with the newspaper decreases, perceived subordinate/supervisor conflict increases.	-.20
5. Perceived Similarity	As journalists perceive themselves as more similar to readers, perceived supervisor/subordinate conflict increases.	.13
6. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own newspaper to be inaccurate, impersonal, noninfluential, untimely, and disrespected, perceived conflict among supervisors and subordinates increases.	-.13
7. Image of Paper	As journalists perceive their own newspaper to be dull, uncaring, and unrepresentative of the community, perceived conflict among supervisors and subordinates increases.	-.16
8. Location	There are location differences.	.15

Overall $R^2 = .31$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .30)
Overall F due to Regression = 24.10; df = 8,431; $p < .001$

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*This predictor was entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed. The regression coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

Do Journalists Like their Work?

> "I have too much thrown at me to try to keep track of .... (It's a) high stress job. I love it but it's stressful."
>
> --A section editor, 1981

> "It is frustrating to see an incompetent change your work."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

> "The bureaucracy here is poor....They don't make good assignments. I don't feel I have control of my work."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

> "This place is understaffed."
>
> --A desk editor, 1981

> "(There is) not a senior position on the staff that has been stable for more than several months or at the most two years. This constant turnaround makes people make decisions that are detrimental to the product."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

> "(Turnover has a) dramatic and pervasive effect. There is a reluctance to make decisions."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

> "When management finds that they don't like somebody, or they don't like the work they're doing for one reason or another... they'll move them until the person gets so dissatisfied they'll leave....Because of the unions they can't out and out fire anyone."
>
> --A reporter, 1981

News people like to complain about their work, but they love it even though it causes stress.

The vast majority reported that they view their jobs as satisfying, pleasant, good, useful, and challenging. Four out of five said their jobs provided them with a sense of accomplishment, and most characterized their work as fascinating and creative. They also seemed to feel their work is considered in a positive light by other people. More than three-quarters of the journalists surveyed agreed that the terms "important" and "respected" accurately described their jobs (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6

Summary of Job Satisfaction Responses

Descriptor	Percent replying:	Yes	?	No	
Useful		93%	5%	2%	*
Good		91%	6%	3%	
Gives sense of accomplishment		83%	7%	10%	
Challenging		82%	4%	14%	
Important		81%	12%	7%	
Satisfying		80%	9%	11%	
Creative		80%	9%	11%	
Respected		78%	13%	9%	
Pleasant		71%	15%	14%	
High pressure		66%	8%	26%	
Frustrating		62%	13%	25%	*
Fascinating		59%	13%	28%	
Endless		57%	11%	32%	
Routine		41%	8%	52%	
Tiresome		35%	13%	52%	
Boring		15%	7%	79%	*
Healthful		13%	28%	59%	*
Simple		12%	4%	84%	*

* Results differed significantly across locations.

While it is apparent from these opinions that journalists have some positive feelings about their work, it is also clear that they see some trade-off. Job related tension was one frequently mentioned negative factor: 66% of the sample viewed their job as high pressure, 62% described their job as frustrating and 57% said it was endless. A number of journalists attributed the cause of this source of stress to constant deadlines and time pressure.

The notion that job-related stress is often the cause of illness is becoming widely documented in the health professions. Journalists judging their own jobs indicated that they felt their work took a toll in terms of their own health. When asked if their jobs might be described as healthful, 59% overall said no. Three related negative attributes varied across locations: healthful, frustrating and boring.

One possible cause of these feelings is the electronic data processing equipment which has recently become as synonymous with journalism as the portable typewriter once was. Complaints about the eye strain and other forms of physical fatigue were common at all newspapers surveyed. Unexpectedly, VDTs were held responsible for another source of strain. Several reporters described their feelings of helplessness and frustration after having lost a story because a computer went down. Others indicated that a shortage of terminals was a source of tension among staffers.

In the long history of research on attitudes toward work, one of the most consistent observations has been that persons in higher levels of the organization tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than persons at lower levels. This is typically explained by the fact that as movement is made toward the top of the hierarchy, jobs offer increased amounts of challenge, autonomy, and variety. To see if this relationship held for journalists, results were again examined by rank in the status hierarchy. Statistical analysis revealed a weak, but statistically reliable, relationship between level and satisfaction with work. While journalists overall evaluated their jobs positively, the most intense attitudes, both negative and positive, were exhibited by upper management. Publishers, managing editors, executive editors, more than any other gorup, described their jobs as important and challenging. These same people also more often considered their jobs as routine, high pressure, and not healthful than individuals lower in the hierarchy (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7

	Job described as . . .					
Position in Newspaper	High Pressure	Not Healthful	Endless	Routine	Important	Challenging
Reporters, copy editors, columnists, photographers	62%	57%	35%	46%	77%	79%
Supervising editors (section, desk, assistants)	72%	58%	18%	65%	89%	90%
Managing editors, executive editors, publishers	92%	79%	28%	71%	96%	93%

Supervising editors displayed a pattern similar to upper management, but to a lesser degree. Staff employees, on the other hand, differed substantially from either group.

To determine what other aspects of journalistic life were associated with work satisfaction, predictors of job satisfaction were identified (see Table 3.8).[1] Two important conclusions emerged. First, certain groups of newspaper employees, identifiable in terms of attitudes and demographic characteristics, are more satisfied than others. Second, the role of the supervisor in providing

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[1] A series of items designed to measure satisfaction with work were taken from the Job Descriptive Index by P.C. Smith, L.M. Kendall and C.L. Hulin, The measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement. Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1969). Initially, responses to these items were examined individually. Later, fifteen items were combined to form a composite work satisfaction index. The criterion for the item inclusion was a positive item-to-total correlation of .30 or greater.

Table 3.8

Predictors of Satisfaction with Work

Predictor	Interpretation of Relationship	Standardized Beta Weight
1. Promotion*	Persons receiving more promotions are more satisfied with their jobs.	.13
2. Age*	Persons in the 35 to 44 age bracket are least satisfied; otherwise, satisfaction increases with age.	.11
3. Reading of Own Paper	The more thoroughly a person reads his/her own paper the more satisfaction with the job.	.12
4. Knowledge of Research	As dissemination of research increases, satisfaction with work increases.	.11
5. Supervisor Subordinate Relations	Persons who receive clear consistent directives and are permitted autonomy in their work express more satisfaction.	.35
6. Years in Present Job	As time in job increases, satisfaction with work increases.	.08
7. Similarity with Supervisor	As perceptions of similarity between supervisor and subordinate increase, satisfaction increases.	.08
8 Image	Persons who see their own newspaper as personal, lively, and interesting report being more satisfied.	.15
9. Image	The more a newspaper is seen as accurate, respected, and influential, the higher the degree of satisfaction.	.09

Overall $R^2 = .28$ (R^2 corrected for shrinkage = .27)
Overall F due to regression = 27.41; df = 6,433; $p < .001$

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*These predictors were entered early in the stepwise regression and later removed. The regression coefficients for these predictors are those estimated at the step at which each one was entered.

direction as well as encouraging participation in decision-making is of major importance.

Demographically, age is associated with an individual's work satisfaction. Persons in the 35-44 age group expressed the least satisfaction with their work; older and younger groups were more satisfied. Those who had held their jobs three years or longer also said that they liked their work significantly more than those who were comparatively new to their jobs. Job change in the form of promotion similarly produced positive effects on journalists' feelings about their jobs. Employees who reported having been promoted within the last two years said that they were more satisfied with their work.

The significance of the supervisor-subordinate interaction made itself clear in several ways. Journalists who said that they received conflicting information about how to do their jobs expressed the highest degree of dissatisfaction. Conversely, supervisors who permitted their employees to exercise autonomy in regard to their own job had the most satisfied subordinates. In short, journalists seem to be saying that they enjoy freedom to make decisions about their work but also want clear direction from their boss as to exactly what he or she wants done. Additionally, those individuals who viewed their boss as similar to themselves reported higher levels of satisfaction.

Another interesting influence on work satisfaction is exposure to research. Newspapers that encourage the dissemination of current research findings among the staff had more satisfied employees. Also, individuals who believed that current research conducted on the newspaper industry affected newsroom decisions reported higher levels of work satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was positively associated with journalists' perceptions of their own papers. Those who perceived their own newspaper as personal, lively, and interesting were among the most satisfied. Similarly, the more a newspaper was seen as accurate, respected, and influential, the more positively the newsroom employees tended to view their job.

Attitudes toward work were related to journalists' media habits as well. The fact that satisfied employees read their paper more thoroughly than less satisfied journalists is consistent with their image of the paper as a sound product.

At this point it should be clear that an individual's attitudes toward work are influenced by a variety of factors. Some of these influences, such as age group, are relatively fixed. Other factors, however, may be influenced by the management of a paper. One potential means of increasing employee satisfaction is alteration of the management style of the immediate supervisor, broadening opportunities for greater participation. Another is increasing the availability of newspaper research findings in the newsroom. Interviews revealed that most newsroom employees rarely had contact with newspaper research. Many felt that upper management, either by design or through neglect, did not share the research information with them. The data from this study suggest that a change in this practice might have positive effects on journalists' attitudes toward their work.

THE READER IN THE MIND'S EYE OF THE JOURNALIST

It was noted in the section on the communication lives of working journalists that many lack familiarity with or hold ambivalent attitudes toward the reader. Yet most journalists claim the reader is their focal point in deciding what is newsworthy and most reporters claim to write for the "average reader." Consequently, it becomes important to know in more detail just what conception journalists hold of the reading audience.

A major portion of the project explored just that. Some survey questions dealt with perceived levels of readership, some, with perceived satisfaction, and some, with the presumed effects of newspapers on readers. Additionally, the interviews probed perceptions of readers in the process of exploring what is news and in questions about newspaper influence on public opinion. Because news people's conceptions of the reader could be based on a number of sources, including data from readership surveys, information reported in academic journals and the trade press, prevailing attitudes in their own newsrooms, views carried with them from their journalistic training, or their own conversations with local readers, we also attempted to assess how such sources of information affected judgments.

How Do People Use Media?

> "The audience is not well enough educated to take advantage of the newspaper."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "Reading is down because of the public's laziness."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981

> "People don't read soft features as much as generally thought."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "People are turned off by news. That's why it's important to have fluff on the front page."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "The American people are not as dumb as a lot of us in the business have believed. The American people really can stay awake longer than 90 seconds; the American people really do care about such subjects as inflation, nuclear disarmament and the like."
>
> -- Jim Lehrer of the PBS MacNeil-Lehrer Report, in a panel address to news executives, Washington, D.C., December 14, 1981

News people underestimate their readers' dependence on newspapers, especially for hard news, and overestimate the public's use of television and interest in fluff.

Staffers were asked to estimate the proportion of adults in their metropolitan area who read their newspaper on an average day. The overall sample produced a perceived readership level of 51% (see Table 4.1). About one-fourth estimated that 30% or less read their paper on an average day, and one-fourth thought that at least 70% read the newspaper. The national average is 67%.

By location, news people's estimates varied from 35% perceived readership in a large metropolitan site to 64% in a small-town locale. Comparison to actual circulation figures available in each of the eight locations revealed these estimates generally to be too conservative.

One exception was one location where overestimates based on misinformation had an impact on other attitudes and behaviors in that newsroom. In the personal interviews, the news staff consistently reported that they must be doing an excellent job in the community because they knew that over 90% of the community was reading their product on a daily basis. The estimate was believed by everyone from top managers to the newest reporter. Actual daily readership was closer to 60% of the community. By some manner, an entire newsroom was basing its behavior on a myth. The result was that many of the people interviewed had no real idea about how their product could better serve its market nor were they very self-critical about how their work could be improved.

A second question asked journalists to estimate the proportion of local readers who had read the newspaper on all five weekdays "last week." The overall estimate was 40%, indicating news people recognize that a sizable segment of the audience does not read the paper faithfully every day.

Asked to estimate the average amount of time the reader spends with the newspaper daily, journalists again gave a conservative estimate. They calculated that the typical reader devotes 24 minutes per day to the newspaper, whereas the national norm is around 35 to 40 minutes, as measured in readership surveys. Only one-tenth of the respondents estimated that readers spend more than a half hour with the paper; most think it is 20 minutes or less. Such underestimates reflect a cynicism about the reading public that was also frequently expressed in the in-depth interviews. Many respondents, when asked why people are reading less often, said, "because they're lazy" or "because they can't read well enough."

Two other questions that probed perceived reading habits asked what proportion of readers read all of a typical front-page hard news article and what proportion read just the first few paragraphs but do not finish the entire story. The journalists estimated that 31% read all of a typical hard news story while an average of 58% probably read only part of a typical front-page hard news item. The combined percentages indicate two interesting tendencies: Journalists perceive front-page story readership to be extremely high among readers (89%) but they also believe that the majority actually discontinue reading before finishing the whole article. Actual readership of hard news items is probably not as widespread as perceived by our respondents; some research indicates that much less than half of the newspaper reading audience reads all or part of a typical hard news item.

Table 4.1

	Journalists' Estimates of Public Media Exposure		National Estimates of Public Media Exposure
Proportion of adults in area who read the newspaper on an average day	51%		67%
Proportion who read the newspaper all five weekdays last week	40%		
Proportion of readers who read all of typical front page hard news item	31%	89%	less than 50%*
Proportion of readers who read only part of typical front page hard news item	58%		
Average minutes per day reader spends with newspaper	24		35 - 40*
Proportion of adults in area who watch any dinnertime network TV newscasts on average weekday	63%		less than 50%*

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* Based on audience surveys, reading and noting, and/or diary studies. Because methods and time frames differ considerably across types of audience studies, precise figures are not possible.

Table 4.2 shows the significant relationships between readership conceptions and various journalist characteristics and behaviors. Eight factors were considered that might shape the estimates of reader exposure patterns: (1) exposure to professional publications, such as *Journalism Quarterly*, *Editor and Publisher*, and public opinion polls, (2) exposure to surveys reporting readership data for their newspaper and trust in these readership studies, (3) contact with readers, including discussion of news events and exchange of opinions with non-journalists, and involvement with a variety of people in the community, (4) similarity to readers in terms of shared definition of news and overlap in values, (5) years in journalism (6) status of position, ranging from reporter or copy editor to supervising editor to managing editor or publisher, (7) years of education at the college level, and (8) sex.

Table 4.2

Significant Correlations Among Journalist Characteristics and Perceptions of Media Exposure *

	Proportion who read newspaper	Proportion who read full story	Minutes reading per day	"Hard news" interest	"Soft news" interest	Feature interest
Exposure to professional publications	+.11					
Exposure to surveys	+.22	+.18		+.13		+.12
Reported contact with readers						
Perceived similarity to readers	+.12					
Years in journalism			+.17		-.11	
Status of position						
Years of education	-.13	-.14				
Sex (male-female)					+.14	+.19

---

* Only significant (p < .01) correlations have been tabled. A (+) sign means that as the row variable increases, so does the column variable. A (-) sign means that as the row variable increases, the column variable decreases. Larger numbers mean stronger relationships.

Those with greater exposure to publications and readership surveys give higher estimates of the proportion of the public reading their newspaper. Exposure to surveys is also associated with a higher perceived proportion of readers fully consuming the typical front page hard news story. Journalists who perceive that readers are similar to them tend to estimate that a higher proportion read their paper. As the level of education increases, the estimated proportions of readers and full article reading are lower. It is noteworthy that supervisors' and subordinates' estimates do not differ. The number of years working as a journalist does not make a difference, either (although it does on some other estimates to be discussed below).

The news people were also asked to calculate exposure levels to newspapers' chief competitor, television news. They estimated that network and local TV news outdraws newspapers. On the average, the print journalists believe that 63% of the adults in their community watch the evening network news each day, and that 64% watch a local newscast (see Table 4.1). Audience surveys reveal these estimates to be rather high, as less than half of the public views television news programs on a typical day.[1] Furthermore, the journalists tend to believe that television is suppressing newspaper reading. In response to the statement, "People who watch a lot of TV news are less likely to read the newspaper," 54% agree, 31% disagree, and the other 15% are in-between. In reality, research evidence shows that those who watch TV news more often are avid newspaper readers. These misperceptions may reflect an insecurity about the threat of electronic journalism and a cynicism about the public's taste for spoon-fed, visual-oriented news. Apparently, TV is feared as providing the easy way out for a lazy public. Said one interviewee, "...like everything else, who's going to make pasta from scratch when they can buy it in a carton." From another came this remark: "People aren't turned off by the newspaper. It is a simple case of it's easier to turn on the television."

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[1] See Leo Bogart, Press and Public: Who Reads What, When, Where, and Why in American Newspapers. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981; George Comstock, Steven Chaffee, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Roberts, Television and Human Behavior (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) and Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White, "The Cumulative Audience of Network Television News," Journalism Quarterly, 1982, 57, 477-481.

Another set of questions examined the types of news stories journalists perceive readers to follow most closely. Respondents were asked to estimate what proportion of readers are "very interested" in eighteen categories of news. The average interest levels ranged from a high of 64% for sports to a low of 28% for religion, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Percent Very Interested	Newspaper Topic
64%	Sports
61%	Celebrities and personalities
60%	Accidents and disasters
60%	General local news
59%	Crime news
53%	General human interest (non-local)
52%	Economic news and issues (cost of living, taxes)
50%	Consumer information and advice
47%	National government news
45%	Education and schools
44%	Fashion, society, food, and home
43%	International news (wars, diplomacy)
42%	State and local government news
42%	Social problems and protests
38%	Business and finance
37%	Environment and energy
36%	Science, invention, and space
28%	Religion

Beyond sports, journalists see readers as being most interested in soft news features such as celebrities and general human interest, sensational topics such as accidents and crime, nongovernmental local news, and pragmatically useful information such as consumer information and food. News people give the reader less credit for interest in national and international news, social issues, environmental and technological news, and business.

These perceptions of journalists can be contrasted with findings from surveys of actual reader interest.[1] Since these norms are not precise or generalizable to each locale, only major discrepancies will be highlighted. When both males and females are taken into account, journalists overestimate by far the interest in sports content. They also overstate interest in non-governmental local news, fashion, food, society and homemaker topics and celebrities and personalities.

On the other hand, news people substantially underestimate audience interest in national government news and stories about environment and energy. Four other hard news categories are slightly underrated: international news, economic news, education and schools, and science. Clearly, the journalists' picture of the reader is less complimentary than actuality, as they downplay reader interest in substantive matters and exaggerate the appetite for superficial material.

Some correlates of news interests appeared in the preceding Table 4.2 above. For this analysis, indices were computed for three categories of news. "Hard news" summed such topics as general local news, economic news, government news, education news, international news, environment news, and science news. "Soft news" included such topics as celebrities and general human interest. Interest in consumer information, religion coverage, business reports, the sports page, and the fashion section were combined into a feature news category. Staffers with greater exposure to readership surveys give higher estimates of interest in hard news and features. Long-time news people see less interest in soft news. Female journalists perceive more interest in soft news and features. The estimates of managers are nearly identical to those of junior staffers, although senior people assign higher interest to general local news, consumer advice, and religion. No other factors are significantly related to these perceptions.

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[1] For more detail, see Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon and Miram Wilkinson, "Dimensions and Readership of Newspaper Content," Newspaper Research Journal, 1981, 3, 74-93, and Judee K. Burgoon, Michael Burgoon and Miriam Wilkinson, "Dimensions of Content Readership in Ten Newspaper Markets," Journalism Quarterly, 1983, in press.

Another facet of the questionnaire measured perceptions of who reads the paper. The journalists were asked to identify which demographic subgroups of the population read the newspaper most frequently (see Table 4.4). Regarding age level, almost all realized that the under-30 year olds are not the heaviest readers. However, somewhat more thought that the middle age group (30-49 years old) read most, whereas actual readership figures show the older segment of society being the most frequent readers. The same pattern occurs for income, as the journalists correctly perceived that lower income people (under $15,000) are least likely to read but many inaccurately estimated that the middle income people read more than those with incomes above the $25,000 level. For educational subgroups, only one quarter of the sample correctly estimated that the college graduates are the heaviest readers; many felt that people with some college read most frequently.

Table 4.4

Journalists' Estimates of the Subpopulations Who Read the Newspaper the Most

		%			%
AGE:	18-29	1	EDUCATION:	High School	16
	30-49	54		Some College	41
	50+	39		College Graduate	26
	Equal	6		Equal	17
INCOME:	Under $15,000	2	SEX:	Males	23
	$15-25,000	50		Females	10
	Over $25,000	39		Equal	67
	Equal	9			
RACE:	Whites	89	LENGTH OF RESIDENCE:		
	Minorities	0		One Year	1
	Equal	11		Two to Ten Years	36
				Ten Years or More	38
				Equal	25

The conceptions of readership demography were most accurate for sex and race. Most perceived that males and females read to a similar degree, and almost all thought that whites read more than minorities. Journalists also tended to believe that longer-term residents read most frequently or that length of residence was not related to readership; very few thought that newcomers to the community are the heaviest readers. The estimated demographic differences in reading patterns were very similar between managers and staffers, and no other background characteristics were significantly related.

Are Readers Satisfied with Newspapers?

> "I can't help but feel that the role of the community newspaper in our society is in better shape than many newswatchers around the country would have us believe."
>
> -- Jim Geeham, former editor and
> publisher of the Tucson Citizen,
> in a panel address to news executives, Washington, DC, December
> 14, 1981

> "Newspaper trust is suffering."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981

> "Credibility is our biggest problem."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981

News people have mixed feelings about whether the public trusts the newspaper and they don't believe the public is highly satisfied with their product.

To assess perceived reader satisfaction with their paper, journalists indicated on a 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) scale how they thought their readers would rate them on overall satisfaction, satisfaction with international/national news coverage and satisfaction with local news coverage (see Table 4.5). A majority (56%) of the journalists thought their readers would give them positive ratings while 22% thought they would receive below average scores. Overall, they gave themselves a 3.24 rating, which is rather low, but it varied considerably by market, with a low estimate of 2.95 and a high of 3.70. As for international and national coverage, they gave themselves a slightly higher 3.34 and for local coverage, a 3.32. Although precise standards of comparison are lacking in each locale, readership surveys have shown most newspapers to earn ratings from their readers of 3.2 to 3.8. This suggests that the journalists may be underestimating satisfaction levels to some extent.

Table 4.5

Estimates of Reader Satisfaction Percent:	Dissatisfied (2.5 or less)	In-Between (3.0)	Satisfied (3.5 or better)	Average
Readers' overall satisfaction with the newspaper	22%	22%	56%	3.24
Readers' satisfaction with coverage of national and international news	24%	19%	57%	3.34
Readers' satisfaction with coverage of local news	27%	15%	58%	3.32

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*Respondents have the following choices: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0.

In the in-depth interviews, news people were asked what parts of their community they thought they were serving most and least well and with which parts of the paper they thought readers were most and least satisfied. Respondents had some difficulty making these assessments. Many identified minority groups, the very young or very old and nonsuburbanites as those being least well served. Although some people were convinced that their paper serves all segments of the community equally well, others were inclined to say that those people who are most similar to them--i.e., the middle class--should find the newspaper most suited to their interests and needs. Said one, "The paper is aimed at fictitious middle America."

As for satisfying or unsatisfying parts of the newspaper itself, each location produced different responses. Each focused on the sections of the paper that had recently undergone improvement or that were believed to be major attractions for readers. Business coverage, sports and features sections received frequent mentions. Areas mentioned most often for not being covered satisfactorily included local news about local people, especially things like wedding announcements and social events, and national and world news.

An analysis of what contributes to news people believing readers are satisfied or dissatisfied showed that those who have greater exposure to research surveys believe readers are more satisfied (correlation = +.26). Those journalists who are most familiar with readership studies recognize that the audience is relatively more satisfied. No other factors, such as position at the newspaper or length of experience in the industry, are significantly related to estimates of reader satisfaction.

Perceived reader evaluations were further assessed through expressions of agreement or disagreement with three statements. As can be seen in Table 4.6 below, nearly half of the journalists believe readers have greater confidence and trust in newspapers than TV, and a majority think their newspaper is seen as fair and accurate. Most also reveal confidence in their news product through rejection of the notion that people only read the paper because there is no alternative.

Familiarity with readership survey findings is the journalist characteristic that is significantly related to these items. Those who have greater exposure to research express greater faith in the credibility of their paper by the readers: There is a +.12 correlation with an index combining the trust and fairness items, and a -.19 correlation for the no-alternative statement.

Table 4.6

Perceived Reader Evaluation	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The public has more confidence and trust in our newspaper than in television news.	48%	30%	22%	3.32
Most readers trust the fairness and accuracy of the news carried in our newspaper.	53%	30%	17%	3.43
People read our newspaper because they have no alternative.	32%	15%	53%	2.61

*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

On the whole, these replies, while generally expressing positiveness, reflect a tentativeness and some degree of pessimism about the public's view of their paper that is probably unwarranted, at least according to an extremely large number of readership surveys. This underestimation of public regard becomes more apparent in interviewees' comments about the causes of nonreadership, to be discussed in a later section.

Do Newspapers Influence Readers?

> "This paper sets the news agenda for this town."
>
> -- An editor, 1981
>
> "If something is played up, it becomes important to readers."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981
>
> "Editorials help readers to understand, but they don't move people."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981
>
> "Campaign endorsements aren't that important -- people don't take the newspaper into the voting booth."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981
>
> "(We are) totally influential. Newspapers are gospel here."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

News people believe their coverage of news events substantially influences the public.

Two items in the survey tapped journalists' conceptions of newspaper influence on the audience (Table 4.7). By a four-to-one margin, they agree that their newspaper has an important impact on the formation of political and social attitudes. An even larger majority feels that the way the newspaper plays the news shapes the public's priorities regarding the importance of issues, leaders and events. Both of these widespread perceptions are in line with recent research evidence demonstrating the political impact of newspapers and the role newspapers play in setting the public's agenda of important subjects, but the degree of perceived effects may be somewhat inflated.

Table 4.7

Perceived Influence	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The way the newspaper plays the news influences the public's priorities regarding which issues, leaders, and events are considered important.	78%	14%	8%	3.97
Our newspaper has an important impact on the attitudes readers form toward political and social issues.	89%	27%	15%	3.53

*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Two journalist characteristics are significantly related to estimates of sizable newspaper influence. Exposure to readership research correlates +.20 with an index composed of the two influence items. In addition, there is a +.18 correlation between the index and the amount of informal contact with readers. Thus, the greater the amount of feedback about the reactions of the readers, the greater the perceived impact of newspapers on the public. For the item dealing with impact on political attitudes, editors are significantly more likely to agree than are subordinates.

These perceptions of impact are echoed in the in-depth interviews. Said one, "The newspaper is a loaded gun." Interviewees were questioned further on the role newspapers play in influencing public opinion on local issues. Importantly, many distinguished between the sizable impact that comes from how the news is played as compared to the lesser impact exercised by editorials. Regarding the latter, one journalist told us, "No one has much of an impact anymore. You run the risk of becoming a common scold."

What Do Journalists Think of Readers?

> "Reporters tend not to be who the readers are."
>
> --An editor, 1981

> "There is a lack of one-to-one correspondence between readers' and journalists' definitions of salience and newsworthiness."
>
> --An editor, 1981

> "The reader of today is far more intelligent...He knows more... Today there is so much more to write about and the reader is hungry for it."
>
> -- A managing editor, 1981

> "There is functional illiteracy among readers...."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "It is necessary to explicitly put the news into context -- otherwise the readers won't understand."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981

A majority of journalists appear to hold a patronizing and unflattering view of their readers.

Previous sections of this report have identified some pejorative views of what the public is able and willing to understand about the news. An analysis of further audience conceptions corroborates this interpretation.

Conceptions of audience interest and sophistication were measured with a series of statements to which the sample could agree or disagree (see Table 4.8). Responses were indicated on a 1 to 5 scale, where a score of 5 represents strong agreement, and a 1 means strong disagreement.

Table 4.8

Reader Perception Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
Readers are more interested in the day's breaking news than in analysis of long-term trends.	61%	23%	16%	3.62
The attractiveness of layout and graphics in the newspaper is important to most readers.	51%	25%	24%	3.36
Most readers can't distinguish local enterprise stories from wire service stories.	41%	24%	35%	3.10
The majority of readers have little interest in reading about social problems such as racial discrimination and poverty.	35%	31%	34%	2.97
The majority of newspaper readers are more interested in hard news items than in soft news and features.	29%	35%	36%	2.93
Women less often read hard news coverage than do men.	29%	28%	43%	2.73
"News of record" such as engagements, divorces, and court activities is no longer of high interest to readers.	29%	17%	54%	2.58
Most readers of the newspaper read the editorial page regularly.	15%	26%	59%	2.38
Most readers prefer to read a few in-depth stories than a number of shorter items.	8%	19%	73%	2.09
Our readers are gullible and easily fooled.	8%	15%	77%	1.89

---

*Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Less than three in ten believe that people prefer to read hard news stories over soft news stories, a belief contrary to research findings on audience interest and readership patterns. Other negative views of the reader appear in the plurality who agree that readers can't distinguish local enterprise from wire stories, the modest proportion who take exception to the statement that people have little interest in stories about social problems, and the high percentage of journalists who endorse or fail to reject the stereotypic notion of women reading hard news content less than men. These beliefs are inconsistent with research findings on audience behaviors. Most journalists do recognize that not everyone reads the editorial page, although they may be overly pessimistic about the regularity of readership. Likewise, they recognize that news of record is still of interest and that attractiveness is important to the reader. They also recognize the reader's preference for breaking news and briefer stories but they may be underestimating the demand that also exists for in-depth analysis of long-term trends and issues.

Again, editors, reporters and other staffers share very similar views on these issues, the one exception being that reporters more often feel readers have lost interest in news of record. Those who have been in the profession longer, however, hold more sexist views about women's readership of hard news. They also express the least faith in the public's ability to distinguish wire copy from locally produced copy and give lower estimates of readership of the editorial page, stories about social problems and news of record. The veterans, then, are in some ways the most cynical.

While 76% of the journalists surveyed at least disagreed with the statement that "readers are gullible and easily fooled," far too many express beliefs that the public is unsophisticated and plebian in its tastes. As one person put it, "There are things they should read but won't. You have to convince them and make them want to read it." Giving in to reader desires, according to these journalists, "would result in a reduction of quality."

"We are not selling soap. We have a responsibility not to dilute quality," summarized one editor. Another agreed, "We have a responsibility that transcends marketing considerations."

That responsibility is interpreted to mean serving as a gatekeeper in deciding what the public needs to know, whether they want to know it or not. "We are surrogates for presumed readers -- we are the satisfier and arbiters of public taste," said one editor. As will be seen, such attitudes can also lead to a rejection of readership research as a way of knowing about readers. As one journalist aptly summed up this viewpoint, "Reporters know best."

To provide a more precise analysis of the factors related to perceived sophistication of readers, an index was created to represent the conception of readers as discriminating, serious, and worldly. A high score on this index indicates agreement that readers are interested in hard news, in-depth stories, and editorial page matter, and disagreement with statements that readers can't distinguish enterprise stories, that they have little interest in reading about social problems, that readers are gullible, and that women read less hard news.

The same variables were used from the previous analyses of reading patterns. There is a -.14 correlation between perceived sophistication and length of time as a journalist, reinforcing the previous conclusion that veteran news people hold a less flattering picture of the reader. Female journalists see readers as somewhat more sophisticated than do male journalists. Those who read more professional publications tend to conceive of readers as more sophisticated, with a significant correlation of +.11. There is also a +.10 association between perceived sophistication and exposure to readership surveys. None of the other journalist characteristics is significantly related.

One apparent reason for the condescending attitude expressed by many news people is that they see themselves as different from the public. The survey asked respondents how similar they feel they are to their readers (Table 4.9). The results reveal that only 30% of journalists questioned believe readers share their values and an even smaller 23% agree that readers "think like me." On news definitions specifically, far less than half believe that readers hold somewhat or very similar opinions. The vast majority see themselves as dissimilar or "in-between" similar and dissimilar to their readers. This tends to contribute to an elitist view among some. As one editor explained it, "It is an inherent problem, inbred--newspapers don't trust the people they are writing about."

Table 4.9

Attitude Statement	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The readers of this newspaper share my values.	30%	50%	20%	3.11
The readers think like me.	23%	43%	33%	2.85
	Percent: Similar (1 or 2)	In-Between (3)	Dissimilar (4 or 5)	Average
To what extent do you think readers share your definition of what is newsworthy? (1 = very similar, 5 = very dissimilar)	43%	32%	24%	2.70

To explore what other demographic and attitudinal factors might relate to journalists feeling similar or dissimilar to the readers, correlations were computed between perceived similarity and such things as beliefs about reader media use, beliefs about reader sophistication, amount of contact with the public, and the journalist's own background. The less experienced journalists tend to see the greatest dissimilarity between themselves and readers. There is a +.20 correlation between the number of years a person has worked in the industry and perceived similarity. Those who have more wide-ranging and frequent contacts with the public, by contrast, see themselves as more similar to the reader (correlation = +.18). Other background characteristics of the journalist, such as education, do not make a difference. Neither does position at the newspaper (supervisory or nonsupervisory) nor location. Thus most journalists, and especially younger ones, see themselves as somewhat unlike their readers; communicating with the public begins to reverse this perception.

THE JOURNALIST AS MEDIA CONSUMER

Much of what news people know about the world about them comes from exposure to the mass media, including their own newspaper, other news media and professional publications. Furthermore, they may use these sources to formulate conceptions about what subjects are newsworthy and how certain topics should be reported. Thus, it is important to ascertain the personal exposure patterns of journalists to such sources of information.

What Media Do Journalists Personally Use?

Information suppliers are information addicts.

Three-fourths of news people reported reading all or most of their own newspaper. When asked, "How thoroughly do you read your newspaper each day," one-eighth reported reading all of it and another two-thirds said they read most of it. Those working in the industry more than 10 years were the most thorough readers. Editors and reporters did not differ in their reported thoroughness of reading.

News staffers read an average of two newspapers other than their own. There is considerable variation in amount of readership, as some do not read any other papers and others read five or more (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Number of Other Newspapers Read	Supervisors/ Editors	Reporters/ Copy Editors
0	9%	13%
1	20%	24%
2	25%	31%
3	25%	16%
4	11%	8%
5+	10%	8%

Clearly, news people are much more exposed to newspapers than are non-journalists. Less than a quarter of the public reads more than one paper, while more than half of the news people read at least three papers including their own. As the table above shows, editors read a greater range of other newspapers, compared to reporters. Many journalists read one of the major "national" newspapers, including one-fourth who report reading the New York Times and one-seventh who read the Wall Street Journal.

Newspaper people also said they watched television news relatively frequently. Nine out of 10 journalists reported watching some national network news each week, and a fourth reported watching at least six days for an average number of days of 3.5. Local TV news viewing was somewhat higher at an average of 4.0 days per week. One-third reported viewing local news six or seven days. TV news viewing was the same regardless of rank, but longer-term employees watched somewhat more than those who have worked 10 or fewer years in the industry. Those with relatively less formal education also watched the news more frequently.

Respondents reported reading an average of 6.0 different magazines a month. A fourth reported reading eight or more magazines, and the vast majority read at least two periodicals. The most frequently read magazines among news personnel are listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Percent Who Read	Magazine
40%	Time
35%	Newsweek
13%	National Geographic
11%	New Yorker
10%	Esquire
9%	U.S. News and World Report

Editors read an average of 6.8 magazines, compared to 5.7 for reporters. However, there were no differences in reading of news magazines specifically.

Examining the exposure patterns across these media, there are several positive relationships. Those who are exposed to one source tend to attend to other sources as well. In particular, there is a very close relationship between the frequency of viewing national news and local news (r = +.77). Those who read their own newspaper most closely also tend to read a larger number of other newspapers (r = +.18) and watch TV news more often (r = +.17). Likewise, those who read more newspapers watch more TV news (r = +.14) and read more magazines (r = +.20), and those who watch more TV news read more news magazines (r = +.16).

Two other factors are related to personal media habits. Journalists who have the greatest amount of interpersonal contact with non-journalists read their own paper more closely (r = +.20), read more other papers (r = +.17), watch TV news more often (r = +.12), and read more news magazines (r = +.13). Those who read more professional publications also have greater exposure to the mass media (r = +.25 for own paper, r = +.33 for other paper reading, r = +.14 for national news and r = .31 for news magazines).

Considering newspapers, television, and magazines, journalists are far above the national norms for exposure to mass media information. In particular, they are extensively exposed to the print media. Thus, they have ample opportunity to keep up with the major developments in society to provide a basis for judging and reporting the news.

Do They Read Professional Publications?

Journalists keep abreast of trends in public opinion by reading poll results but are much less likely to read readership research reports. A variety of periodicals carry trade and research information relevant to the journalism profession. The survey questionnaire listed key titles or categories of publication, asking each respondent to indicate which were read on a regular basis. The findings for supervisors and supervisees appear in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Professional Publications	Percent Who Read Regularly Managers/ Supervisors	Reporters/Copy Editors
Public opinion poll reports in magazines and newspapers (e.g., Harris, Gallup, Yankelovich)	72%	56%
Editor and Publisher	61%	47%
Critical reviews (e.g., Columbia Journalism Review, Washington Journalism Review)	56%	41%
Quill	36%	24%
ASNE Bulletin	23%	4%
Editor's Exchange	21%	1%
Presstime	17%	3%
ANPA News Research Report	16%	2%
Academic publications (e.g., Journalism Quarterly, Newspaper Research Journal)	8%	6%
APME News	10%	2%

Three-fifths of the journalists monitor the results of polls conducted by national research organizations. Half of the sample reported reading Editor and Publisher, and one-fourth read Quill. Critical reviews of the field, such as Columbia Journalism Review, are read by almost half of the journalists. None of the other publications reaches as much as one-tenth of the overall sample. In particular, very few are exposed to periodicals carrying research information, such as Journalism Quarterly or ANPA News Research Reports.

For all of these professional publications, managers and supervisors read more than do those at lower ranks. Editors are more likely to read polls, critical reviews, Editor and Publisher and Quill, and they constitute most of the audience for secondary trade press publications. In addition, news people with at least 10 years experience have slightly higher readership for these periodicals; the main exception is *Quill*, which is more popular with newer journalists.

These findings suggest that journalists are not motivated to seek out research information aside from public opinion poll data. While reading of the trade press is widespread, sources featuring substantive research about the industry and reading audience are not well-read.

What Role for Research?

> "Surveys are locked up like crown jewels. They don't want reporters to know."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "Surveys shouldn't substitute for judgement."
>
> -- A section editor, 1981

> "Surveys should help inform decisions-- scientific research deserves more weight than a conversation with a neighbor."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

> "Reporters know best."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

News people are apprehensive about the research studies that are becoming increasingly widespread in the industry. They have limited exposure to research findings, some skepticism about the validity of the procedures, and some reluctance to utilize the findings in decision-making.

One-third of the journalists reported that they attempt to keep up with current newspaper industry research. Editors and long-term journalists make a greater effort to keep current and would favor spending more money on research. Just one person in five agreed that their newspaper facilitates the dissemination of research findings to staff members (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

Research Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
I make an effort to stay abreast of current newspaper industry research.	33%	25%	42%	2.87
In general, my newspaper encourages the dissemination of current research findings among the staff.	19%	25%	56%	2.34**
Findings of current research conducted on the newspaper industry often affect the decisions made in our newsroom.	23%	36%	41%	2.69**
If I were responsible for the budget of my newspaper, I would favor spending more money on research.	41%	30%	29%	3.16

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* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
**Results differed significantly across locations.

The restricted dissemination of research information is further illustrated by the widespread lack of awareness of the Newspaper Readership Project. Fewer than one-third of the sample had heard of the project, and just 14% had seen any of the research reports. Again, long-time and management level personnel had greater exposure.

To assess the pattern of diffusion of research findings in the organization, one question asked, "How soon do you find out about newspaper research findings?" The responses appear in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

	Supervisors/Editors	Reporters/Copy Editors
I obtain research results . . .		
before anyone else	5%	1%
before most people on the staff	28%	7%
about the time everyone else does	39%	42%
after everyone else	7%	8%
almost never	21%	42%

Clearly, supervisors find out about research before reporters and other staffers. More than two-fifths of the reporter group rarely learn about research. These responses indicate that the diffusion of information within the newsroom is limited and follows a hierarchical pattern.

Exposure to local readership surveys is more widespread, particularly among supervisors. About half of the sample had seen or hear about the findings of one or two readership surveys, and a fifth had learned about several studies. When asked in what form readership information was received, the most common mode was discussions with supervisors (45% of editors and 20% of reporters), followed by memos or brief summaries (29% of editors and 19% of reporters), conversations with co-workers (24% of editors and 17% of reporters), and written full-length reports (28% of editors and 9% of reporters). In addition, about one-tenth had heard researchers' oral presentations. Thus, formal channels are used more than informal, and oral communication is more prevalent than written messages. In the personal interviews, a common complaint was that such research information is not made available to the staffs.

When asked to evaluate newspaper industry audience research, news people gave neutral to slightly positive ratings (see Table 5.6). Roughly three-fifths of the respondents rated newspaper research as relatively useful, beneficial and necessary, but only half characterized it as valid. About one person in nine gave unfavorable rating scores.

There were no differences by location or position (reporters versus supervisors). Journalists who reported the greatest exposure to audience research felt more favorably about it, as did those with the greatest exposure to professional publications. This indicates that greater familiarity with research information leads to greater appreciation of it, or vice versa.

Table 5.6

Evaluations of Newspaper Industry Audience Research on Five-Point Scale

Percent rating:	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Invalid (1) to Valid (5)	3%	10%	38%	32%	18%	3.54
Useless (1) to Useful (5)	2%	10%	27%	42%	19%	3.66
Worthless (1) to Beneficial (5)	2%	8%	32%	39%	19%	3.64
Unnecessary (1) to Necessary (5)	2%	10%	29%	32%	27%	3.72

The statement in Table 5.4 about a person's own willingness to fund research provides further indication of people's attitudes toward it. Two out of five said they would favor more money for research, while 29% disagreed. Those who gave a more favorable evaluation of research on utility, benefit, validity and necessity were more likely to support greater budget allocations to research (correlation = +.53). There was also an association between exposure to research and support for more spending (correlation = +.35). Supervisors were more likely than subordinates to favor greater expenditures.

Although many journalists agree that research can be valuable, only a fourth agreed that the findings of readership research often affect newsroom decision-making. Most also believed research is much more appropriate for advertising purposes, identification of audience demographics and selecting features than for making editorial decisions about news stories. Four out of five said audience research is appropriate to give advertisers information, three out of four said it could inform decisions about layout and format, and nearly two-thirds said it was an acceptable aid in selecting features. But half said it should not be used to decide newsworthiness of stories and over half thought that using research to guide news judgments would result in important news going uncovered (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7

Appropriate Uses for Readership Surveys

Possible Uses	Yes	No	Not sure
To help determine what types of stories are newsworthy	44%	50%	6%
To help decide what features to publish	64%	29%	8%
To help plan changes in format and layout	75%	18%	7%
To help provide information to advertisers about audience	80%	14%	7%

If newspapers were guided by readership surveys in deciding what news to cover, do you think that important news would go uncovered?	Not at all	Possibly	Probably	Definitely
	19%	30%	26%	26%

Supervisory and long-time personnel were more likely to feel that research can be used for all four purposes mentioned. There was also a positive relationship between endorsing these uses for research and favorable evaluations of research (correlation = +.22). Despite differential expressions of support for research in interviews at the eight locations, no location differences appeared on these survey questions.

The in-person interviews did provide some insights into why news people view research as they do and what role it currently plays. As in the survey, most journalists reported that research has little impact on newsroom decisions. Just one in seven felt that readership studies affect judgments about the relative priority given to various news topics. For instance, one publisher said, "They have an impact on how we assign reporters, how we play stories." When asked if research should have more influence, a majority agreed, but their support usually carried many qualifications.

Those who supported greater reliance on surveys spoke of using them as a tool or loose guide to know more about their readers so that reader needs could be better served; they did not believe that reader preferences should exert a controlling influence. One person said, "A lot of us suspect large segments of the community don't read us -- we would like to know more," while another commented that scientific research should help inform decisions and carry more weight than the passing remarks of a neighbor. But others warned, "Surveys shouldn't substitute for judgment," and "Readers don't know what they need -- we do." One segment felt that they really don't need survey information to understand the audience: "We represent the cross-section -- we have the feel," and "Surveys are often redundant with what we already know or intuit."

Interviewees were asked to identify specific problems and pitfalls of relying on readership surveys. The two most frequent criticisms centered on the technical quality of the data and the potential misuse in pandering to reader preferences. Some journalists questioned the representativeness of the survey samples or the ability to elicit meaningful responses from readers. Some typical comments:

> "Surveys are unreliable."
>
> "Surveys ask the wrong type of questions."
>
> "People give what they should say and not what they really think."

In addition, many journalists said they do not find survey results to be understandable.

The other substantive pitfall involves the danger of playing to popular tastes and the threat that this poses to journalists fulfilling their professional responsibility. If surveys begin to play a larger role, some said journalistic standards might be undermined, as reflected by these observations:

> "We can't let the reader run the newspaper."
>
> "We are professionals, we know what is news."
>
> "They would give readers only what they want and not what they need."

In sum, journalists are ambivalent toward readership surveys. They view the findings with suspicion and concern, but realize that some useful guidance can be gleaned from them.

Before committing more resources and attention to readership survey findings, editors and reporters need to be reassured about the lack of threat of such information to their journalistic autonomy and they need to be convinced about the technical merit of survey data. Once these roadblocks are removed, news people may be more receptive to inputs from survey researchers who measure the reading audience.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS

This section looks at the condition of the industry with an eye towards the future of print journalism. It includes discussions of journalists' images of their newspapers, of their ideas about nonreadership, of movements within the journalistic profession that challenge the status quo, and of the future of journalism.

In general, the responses encountered during the personal interviews and surveys were more positive than negative. But, average responses fail to tell the entire story. In each section, a closer look at the responses reveals potential problems that should give rise to management concern. While the specific nature of the problems differs, the binding thread is the concern of a large number of journalists that the profession is presently out of step with readers and is making little effort to regain the march.

What Image Do Journalists Hold?

> "Newspapers are one of the major institutions that are natural sources of resentment. We are viewed as outsiders in the community. Groups accentuate that. We need to get back to the community, be part of it."
>
> -- A journalist, 1981

News people hold a moderately positive image of their newspaper/ but are tentative about its future and public image.

News people generally believe their newspaper has a good image and is trying to make the changes required to expand readership. Respondents disagreed with the statement that the image of their newspaper is declining but are less convinced as to whether or not they will continue to lose readership. Those who do feel that their newspaper's image is declining tend to be reporters more so than editors. Respondents also indicated that they feel the newspaper is making progressive changes in content and format but are less assured that these changes will regain lost readers. Again, editors are more optimistic than reporters. Replies are summarized in Table 6.1.

While the average responses indicate a guarded optimism, a large number offer a more pessimistic perspective. Over a fourth of those responding feel their newspaper's image is actually declining and that it is not making the corrections needed to stop the backsliding. An alarmingly large group, 40% of those responding, agreed that readers will increasingly turn to other media that will better serve their needs. More reporters feel this pessimism than editors.

Table 6.1

Image/Future Statements*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
The image of our paper is declining.	27%	24%	48%	2.67
We are making headway in regaining readers' interest and confidence.	39%	32%	28%	3.10
It is likely that we will lose readers, relative to our population growth, in the next five years.	28%	23%	39%	2.95**
I feel readers in the future will more and more turn to other media that better meet their needs.	40%	29%	32%	3.11**
I feel this newspaper has been making progressive changes in content and format.	56%	19%	29%	3.42**
I am optimistic about the future of print journalism in our community.	48%	24%	27%	3.32**

---

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Results differed significantly across locations.

While the concern over image is plainly there, the causes behind it are less clear. "Newspapers are seen as arrogant," was the reasoning offered by one editor. "People are sick to death with reporters as defenders of their freedom," commented another. Those journalists who feel that newspapers and journalists are out-of-touch with their communities believe that the communities sense the separation.

The optimists tend to cite the newspaper's traditional role of providing in-depth coverage as a means of attracting and holding readers. The faith that newspapers have a guaranteed role in their communities was expressed by one editor: "(People) trust newspaper news more than TV news because they can get more details (from the newspaper) which help them determine how good the story is. We have no reason to slant a story." The less optimistic disagreed. "The backlash of Watergate has served to cause distrust of newspapers and reduce their influence on public opinion." Others pointed to newspaper scandals as tarnishing their image: "Coverage of (newspaper scandals) has caused people to distrust newspapers."

Journalists may be unnecessarily pessimistic about the public's view of them. This is evident by comparing the journalists' own image ratings with those the public gives its local newspapers.[1] Journalists see their newspapers' image as being stronger in trustworthiness, accuracy, lack of bias, competence, and lack of sensationalism than do readers. Readers, on the other hand, see their newspapers as acting as a community watchdog, carrying the latest news, personalizing the news, being courageous and lively, and caring about the reader to a greater extent than does the average journalist. While readers tend to exalt journalists and their role in the community, they do not necessarily attribute to them the trustworthiness and fairness that many journalists see as the sanctity of the profession.

These discrepant images are likely a result of both groups simply not understanding each other. The lack of understanding may be the fault and should be the worry of the journalist. "(The newspaper industry) doesn't do a good job of educating the reader about the profession and how to communicate with it. (This is) due to our hands-off policy toward our own industry," commented an editor. Faced with a lack of reliable information, the public turns to the image presented via the entertainment media or to the stories about the reporting scandals.

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[1] These conclusions are based on results from readership research in over 40 newspaper markets, including 21 of the largest SMSA's in the country.

If journalists are to continue relying on the trustworthiness, accuracy and objectivity of their product to attract readers, they would be well served to realize that that image is less stable than they currently believe. On the other hand, if they are going to entice readers with format and content changes, they should know that readers already think of the paper as less dull, less impersonal and more enterprising than journalists do.

Are Newspapers Losing Readers?

> "TV -- it's killing us."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

That quote captures the problem from most journalists' perspective. While some respondents cited more complex causation for a decline in readership, such as life style changes, leisure-time activities, or reading habits and abilities, most thought TV was at the root of the evils. When interviewees were asked if they felt TV had caused the decline in readership of newspapers, 85% agreed. Most thought it was television's visual attraction that drew away their readers. They said the visual element makes television easier, more satisfying, and more believable (but not more credible) than newspapers. Television gives people short, fast-paced news and is in contrast with the newspaper's detailed, professional, objective treatment of a story, they said.

This contrast between the television and newspaper format is considered important by journalists, partially because of their negative image of the average reader. "People may not want more than the 30-second voice-over they get on television," was a typical comment. Readers, according to the journalists interviewed, are reading less, largely because reading ability is on the downswing. Those that aren't "functionally illiterate" are thought not to have the time to read because of outside time demands, because of their laziness, or because today's life style seduces the reader away from the newspaper. The notion is therefore one of a changing reader who is enticed away from the newspaper, not who turns away because the paper fails to meet his or her needs.

A minority of respondents were not in agreement and chose to look inside the newspaper industry for the causes of readership decline. "TV is mostly a scapegoat for the editors," indicated a reporter. The opinions of this group are in line with a respondent who commented, "The newspaper has gotten fatter, more complete, but may be too wordy and more intimidating." Some said their newspaper is too dull. One remarked that, "The paper is a bland beast." Another indicated that print journalists have fallen behind broadcasters and need to catch up: "... Partly, we've abdicated immediacy to TV and radio. We haven't been aggressive enough in telling people what news means to them, covering things radio and television cannot." There was even optimism, as expressed by one editor, "TV has changed the way we have to cover things. It has cut down on newspaper readers, but it also is our best way of creating interest -- the reader's interest is whetted by TV."

Even the self-examiners and the optimists were of a traditional school of thought that treats television as entertainment and newspapers as the only real journalism. While not contained in any single quotation or response to a survey item, the general sentiment expressed overall was that print journalism does something that the reader needs, but that because of the attractiveness of television, does not want in sufficient quantity. Neither the journalists who blamed TV news nor those who blamed the newspaper industry spoke of the need to find out what the reader wants. Rather, they stressed reader needs that are defined by the professional journalists and simply proposed to catch up to television by offering more attractive layouts and doing a better job of "telling the people what news means to them."

Do VDTs Please?

> "I luv'em...when they work."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981
>
> "(VDTs) limit communication between everyone in the newsroom. Stories don't get around so fast."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

Good computer systems make the news business more fun for all except copy editors.

When asked about the use of video display terminals in the newsroom, the typical response was positive: "They are faster, easier and more convenient." Survey results, shown in Table 6.2, indicate more divided opinion. While a majority feel comfortable with the new technology and feel that VDTs have made their job more pleasant, over a third are dissatisfied with the way the new technology is being used in their newsroom.

Table 6.2

Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
I am satisfied with the way electronic news processing technology is used at this newspaper.	46%	18%	35%	3.13 **
The training I received in how to use the new technology was adequate.	45%	20%	35%	3.09 **
I am comfortable with my ability to operate the new technology that my job requires.	71%	15%	14%	3.80 **
The presence of new technology has significantly reduced the amount of discussion among reporters and editors.	22%	18%	60%	2.38 **
Overall, the introduction of new technology has made my job more pleasant.	55%	22%	23%	3.48 **

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* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Results differed significantly across locations.

Reactions differed significantly across locations. In one newsroom, satisfaction averaged a high of 4.52 on the 5-point scale; at another, it was a low of 2.43. Unhappiness with the local system appears primarily related to availability of and access to the terminals and secondarily, to the system's reliability. Commenting on accessibility, one reporter offered, "We're still typing on IBM typewriters. The system is inadequate." Another summarized the staff's frustration with, "I don't have access to the equipment. Huge fights break out over whether or not the system will work and if we can get access to a VDT." Others centered on the system's frequent breakdowns as a source of dissatisfaction. "They have problems... like disappearing." Satisfaction, on the other hand, seems related to the absence of these problems.

Reactions to VDTs also differed by age and position. Older journalists are less satisfied and comfortable with the new technology than are younger staffers. Supervisors are more confident about their ability to operate the system than are subordinates. Surprisingly, despite the fact that most respondents feel copy editors are the main beneficiaries of the new systems, it is the copy editors who are least satisfied.

The training one receives on how to operate the system is related to overall satisfaction. In general, respondents were moderately satisfied with the training they received. Again, the differences across locations are significant, with satisfaction ratings ranging from moderately dissatisfied (average = 2.46) to highly satisfied (average = 4.00). Not surprisingly, there is a consistent ordering of locations on questions dealing with overall satisfaction and adequacy of training programs. Across all locations, satisfaction with the overall system and satisfaction with the training program are highly correlated ($r = +.41$), as are confidence in one's ability to operate the technology and training ($r = +.54$).

A frequently heard complaint, in addition to the problems of access and reliability, was that the new technology reduced the amount of face-to-face discussion between editors and reporters. For example, one respondent said, "News editors can look at stories easier so they can preview them easier. That should be useful. But, it also locks them to the VDT, so they have less contact with the staff." Another staffer indicated the decreased communication slows the work. The survey data do not entirely support these claims, as

60% of the respondents disagreed that the technology limited discussion. However, 22% did indicate lesser discussion among reporters and editors. Supervisors disagreed more strongly than nonsupervisors, possibly because a supervisor has greater contact with a larger number of subordinates while a reporter has more restricted contact with those in management positions. There were also significant differences across locations and age groups, a finding that may reflect the effect of different management styles and a general bias against the technology by older respondents.

Finally, journalists were asked if the new technology had made their jobs more pleasant. The responses were generally positive, with 55% agreeing, but again showed significant differences from one newspaper to another (responses ranged from an average of 4.61 to 2.94). In general, the higher ratings were at locations with the positive attributes discussed above, while the lower evaluations were in newsrooms with problems with equipment access and reliability. No significant differences were indicated between supervisors and nonsupervisors considered as groups, but differences were present between specific job categories. Most notably, copy editors stood alone in their disagreement that the new technology made their jobs more pleasant (an average of 2.86 as compared with 3.83, 3.31, 3.75 and 3.43 for reporters, columnists, supervisory editors and senior management staff, respectively).

Although the dissatisfaction of the copy editors is initially surprising, it is less so upon examination of the reported likes and dislikes common to users of VDTs. As Table 6.3 indicates, by far the most commonly expressed advantage of the electronic news processing equipment is a combination of speed, ease, and convenience and the most common disadvantages are complaints of eye strain, tension, headaches, and the fear of breakdowns. The copy editors, by nature of their jobs, feel least benefitted and most taxed by the technology. With the exception of large scale copy changes, it is probably not significantly easier for them to change a word or letter with a cursor on a screen than with a blue pencil on paper. The relative advantage of the system is likely a function of individual preference and ability to manipulate the machine's commands. Further, the copy editor's job requires detailed work and long hours at the VDT which exacerbates such problems as eye strain and headaches. Conversely, other staffers and supervisors often spend major portions of their daily routine away from the VDT, minimizing the negative aspects of the equipment.

Table 6.3

Common likes of VDT's	Common dislikes of VDT's
More convenient	Breakdowns
Easier to write	Loss of material
Easier to edit	Eye strain
Easier access to stories, notes	Health worries
Easier retrieval of material	Headaches
Faster	Tension
Cleaner copy	Shortage of terminals
Like to write on it	Limits communication
Better writing	Vibrations
Lighter writing	Interactive command problems
	Hard to find stories, notes
	Newsroom adapts to machines
	Difficult to train reporters on writing style
	Reporter/editor contributions not identifiable
	More emphasis on mechanics than writing
	No effect on deadline pressure
	Miss sound of typewriters
	Frightened by it
	More tempting to edit stories

The discrepancy between the opinions of copy editors and other newsroom personnel relative to the technology is highlighted by a series of questions probing the benefits of the electronic processing of news. The results, summarized in Table 6.4, show widespread agreement that the technology has benefitted the copy editors. Copy editors, however, were less enthusiastic. While the average response for all surveyed was 4.03, the average for copy editors was a much lower 3.62. They also were much less likely to agree that the new technology benefits "me" (average = 3.31) than were respondents in general (average = 3.70). Managers should be made aware that, while there is considerable evidence that many copy editors are neither satisfied with nor benefitted by the new technology, few people in the newsroom are aware of their viewpoints.

Table 6.4

Statement*	Percent: Agree (4 or 5)	In-Between (3)	Disagree (1 or 2)	Average
In my opinion, the introduction of electronic news processing technology has proven very beneficial for...				
...the newspaper overall	81%	12%	6%	4.22**
...copy editors	75%	13%	12%	4.02**
...supervising editors	71%	18%	11%	3.98**
...the production staff	70%	16%	14%	3.94**
...the reporters	65%	22%	13%	3.79**
...me	64%	16%	20%	3.70**
...the readers	45%	31%	24%	3.35**

---

* Asked on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
**Results differed significantly across locations.

With respect to the remaining job types, 71% of the journalists agreed that the new technology had benefitted supervisors. Differences again appear across location and show a linear relationship with age (younger respondents being more likely to agree than older respondents). Similarly, 65% see the new technology as benefitting reporters and 70% see it benefitting production staff.

One troublesome finding is the perceived failure of newspapers to translate their staff-related benefits of new technology to readers. While respondents agreed strongly that the technology benefits the newspaper overall, they were less likely to agree that it also benefitted readers. Clearly, such advancements as ease, speed, and convenience are not necessarily reader-related. However, it would seem that the reader would benefit if the technology positively affected news-gathering or decision-making within the newsroom. As seen in the summary of comments from personal interviews (Table 6.5), the potential for reader benefits is clearly present. For example, more timely reporting, increased stories, better writing, and easier adaptation of stories to breaking events or local interests could be directly translated into better satisfaction of readers' wants and needs. On the other hand, the majority of the effects on decision-making are negative and indicate that the newspapers may not have adapted to the new technology successfully or in a manner that best uses the technology to improve the final product.

Table 6.5

Effects on news-gathering

- More timely reporting
- More stories covered
- Stories easier to adapt/change
- Less gatekeeping because more people see story
- Greater control over content/volume
- Stories easy to preview/edit
- Portable machines permit easier access to distant stories
- Can write up to deadline
- Slowed processing of story
- Easier to process wire copy

Effects on decision-making

- Editors more involved because preview easier
- Less gatekeeping by individuals
- Moved deadline up 1 1/2 hours
- Less staff contact
- Cannot get hard copy when needed
- Creates staff conflicts

What Impact from "New Journalism"?

> "In features, we have lots of people who want to be Tom Wolfe or Gay Talese. This can be a problem if it brings elaborate descriptions of what could have happened and not what actually happened."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

> "News is a three piece suit. Features is an Hawaiian shirt. There's room for shirts in this business."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

A trend towards emphasizing style and technique over the traditional 5 W's worries editors. A difference of perspective exists in many newsrooms concerning the advantages and the propriety of new journalism. According to older, traditional viewpoints, new journalism is a threat to the credibility and professionalism of journalism. Many younger journalists themselves see it as the new wave, capturing the reader's attention and interest and telling a more complete story. Some, therefore, see it as having the potential to destroy the business; others look to it as a means of saving journalism.

The new journalism movement, as referenced by senior editors, actually encompasses two different but related movements. One is the trend illustrated by Wolfe, Talese, Capote, and others who emphasize style, technique, detail, subjectivity, and unconventionality over traditional canons of journalistic writing. This part of the new journalism movement sees reporting as an art form rather than a craft. The second element in the senior editors' conception of new journalism follows from the Woodward and Bernstein tradition of investigating the important, anti-establishment story, and reporting it in a relatively traditional format.

The fear of editors seems not of these movements in themselves, but instead centers on an idea that if they are coupled with youthful impatience, with a departure from traditional values of accuracy and objectivity, and an unwillingness to adequately research the material, the result may be speculation, bias, and even fabrication of stories. Said one editor, "We've got to train (younger journalists) to be reporters, to pick up the rock and look under it." Commented another, "(Younger reporters) have a grandiose idea of what it is to be a journalist. They want to be a star and are not concerned or prepared for boring county commission meetings. Investigative reporting is also boring and tedious... They see themselves as writing the big story, not digging for it."

The worry, then, is the threat to accuracy. "Accuracy is still the very basic thing. That's why it is better to have reporters than writers," cautioned a senior editor. Not surprisingly, just about everyone agreed. As noted at the outset of this report, when respondents were asked to rank order six qualities of a news story, including accuracy, impartiality, depth, investigative enterprise, sophistication of treatment and literary style, accuracy and impartiality were top ranked. They were listed as most or second most important by 96% and 62% (respectively) of the survey respondents . The qualities associated with new journalism, such as literary style and sophistication of treatment, were ranked as highly important by less than 5% of those responding.

Although accuracy was highly regarded by most respondents, the fears of editors were supported by some significant differences relative to rankings of story qualities by journalists of different ages and different levels of experience. For example, less experienced journalists were more likely to rank the depth of a story as important than were more experienced staffers. Impartiality was more valued by older respondents than by younger ones. And, as feared by editors, while the younger reporters favored depth over impartiality, they were also less likely to value investigative enterprise than were the seasoned, older journalists.

For many, the hope of new journalism rests in a perceived need to package news into a more readable and interesting format. Supporters see features as a means of reaching that end. The subjective element should not be feared, according to some news people, because the reader is sophisticated enough to separate hard fact from a reporter's speculation and ideas. The added emphasis on the subjective elements presents a more complete and interesting story to the reader, comparable to the visual element provided by television news coverage. As to threats of inaccuracy and fabrication, many editors and reporters believe the profession will weed out those who might stray from journalistic values. Said one editor, "The best will remain; the others will go."

A few respondents see new journalism as already dying, a trend supported by the survey data. While the data reveal a declining commitment to traditional journalism values with age, the relationship is somewhat curved, with the middle aged and mid-career journalists generally most liking new journalism. The very young and the senior staffers hold closer to traditional values. This indicates the wave of "Hawaiian shirt" journalism may be passing. On the other hand, the people most likely to hold these nontraditional ideas may soon be moving into management positions, and may be in a position to influence the younger reporters toward feature writing. Whether either condition is good for journalism is dependent on how one views the trend, i.e., whether "three piece suits" or "Hawaiian shirts" are considered the best image to offer the reader.

One final comment concerning new journalism should be made. There is a feeling among some reporters and editors that group ownership has changed journalists by making them corporate- rather than community-oriented. This is in line with the concern expressed by some editors and reporters alike about people becoming too opportunistic and too concerned with organizational politics. One said, "There are a lot of idiotic people in the newspaper business currently. New people are too aggressive, upwardly mobile -- too career oriented and the corporation encourages this." The fear connected with these traits is that upward mobility within a group newspaper generally means a change of location, and aggressiveness means the more changes, the better.

The end result can be that reporters and editors will have less and less contact with their communities and be more and more encouraged to conform to corporate norms and values. Many of the problems thus far discussed in this report--of not being part of a community, of not understanding reader needs, of not wanting to dig for a story--may be more of a threat to corporate-owned newspapers than to independently owned presses. The corporate philosophy was present in many responses to the interview question concerning who a reporter had in mind when he or she sat down to write a story. While "the reader" was in the forefront, one's "peers," "other journalists," one's "podmates" or one's supervisors were not far behind.

What Responsibility for Journalism Education?

> "About the only advantage a J-School graduate has over anyone else is that they often know how to use a VDT."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

> "Journalism faculty just do not know what is happening in this industry any more."
>
> -- An editor, 1981

> "I was taught to be isolated from everyone in journalism school."
>
> -- A reporter, 1981

> "If you want to do something about this (insularity), you are going to have to start with the educators, they're responsible."
>
> -- A publisher, 1982

> "God, I resent the fact that they did not prepare me to do my job."
>
> -- A reporter, 1982

> "My biggest concern is what kind of journalist we are producing today...Entry level people are the most abysmal lot I've ever seen."
>
> -- A managing editor, 1981

Many journalists look back on their formal education with a less-than-positive attitude about those experiences.

A majority of the people interviewed in this study claimed that most of what they had learned about the news business came from on-the-job training received after they left school. Of those who had graduated from journalism schools, 24% thought their education was very or somewhat worthless, while slightly more than half thought it had value; the rest were neither laudatory nor critical. The distribution of survey replies and the interview comments suggest that many journalism school graduates have some reservations about their educational experiences. While this project included very few questions to probe the sources of discontent with the educational experiences of working journalists, some sources of discontent surfaced in the face-to-face interviews.

One is that journalism education is not preparing young, would-be journalists for an increasingly quantitative, numbers-oriented and scientific world. Some journalists told us they were unprepared to understand research data, including readership research. Others mentioned the absence of any quantitative orientation in their education. Some even admitted initially entering journalism school, at least in part, because they had low aptitude or interest in math and knew this was one place they could avoid encountering a lot of numbers.

When these attitudes were relayed to working editors and to journalism educators, some responded with skepticism, others with anger and others with complete disbelief that journalists would say such things. Some editors and educators disagree with the notion that the world in which we live is a quantitative one or profess not to understand what a quantitative world might be. Others reject the notion that journalists have to deal with a world that has become more complex, more scientific and more data-based. One editor suggested that the social sciences had contributed nothing to our understanding of human behavior and that newspaper people would be better off just ignoring anything that was based upon either numbers or some quasi-scientific attempt to understand more about the public they intended to serve. Earlier in this report, we discussed in detail the suspiciousness of many journalists about research. Some reporters and editors added that such suspicions were first learned in college classes.

Many people who distrust research believe that you cannot replace "art" with "science." They claim that they were taught that journalists are the best judges of what the public ought be given and that it is their professional responsibility to make such decisions. This is consistent with the earlier noted preference of many to give the public "what they ought to know" and with such comments as, "Reporters know best."

However, there is also a significant group of journalists who say that they are unprepared to use or evaluate quantitative information. We were told that journalists need more training to better understand how to use research to tailor their products to the needs, wants and desires of the reading and non-reading public. They also need to know how to assess research used by others. For example, reporters on political beats must contend with politicians' increased use of sophisticated polling techniques and the use of numerical data by candidates. For many journalists, research is a mystery and they feel at the mercy of research firms and managers who control such information. Consequently, they may be skeptical of it.

A related deficiency in journalism education, according to some, is preparation in such quantitative sciences as business and economics. Some journalists expressed discomfort in writing about business without a basic understanding of the principles of economics. Reporters assigned to cover finance, economics, government, and politics were the most likely to criticize the lack of preparation they received in journalism schools. Editors also mentioned the unavailability of qualified people to write in some of these areas.

Colleges of Business long ago recognized the need to train would-be managers in the quantitative sciences and decision-making. Journalism schools have been slow to recognize such a need, partially because the faculty are not themselves trained in such methods. Many young journalists aspire to advance to management positions as soon as possible but lack the training to do many of the tasks required of media managers. There are few first-rate newspaper management programs in existence in this country. Several people interviewed in this study were seeking graduate degrees in management at their local universities. Some were resentful that they could not get management training specifically developed for their profession. Feedback since the preliminary report was released has bolstered our initial conclusion that many journalists want more training in media management yet have no idea where they might obtain such a program.

There are several policy implications apparent from our interview data. First, there is a general feeling among journalists that college professors are very isolated from what is happening in the profession. We often heard it said that college professors are people who could not make it in the profession and now exist in a vacuum in which their understanding of newspapers decreases year by year. Journalists and those in management positions feel strongly that the deficiencies in journalism education will only be solved when professors get more in touch with the industry.

Second, a clear majority (65%) of journalists want their newspapers to be more active in mid-career training opportunities. When such opportunities present themselves, journalists express appreciation. They also have very definitive ideas about what they want additional training programs to deal with. The questionnaire data yielded the following most often mentioned topics for additional training (listed in order of most often mentioned):

1. Training and information about electronic media
2. Management training
3. Research, computers, statistics
4. Graphics and layout
5. Business and economics
6. Writing and editing improvement

Third, the data reinforce the concern, discussed throughout this report, with the competing electronic media and a desire to learn more about how they function. Moreover, these results provide support for the conclusions drawn in this section about a desire for more attention to research, management, business and economics as well as some nuts and bolts of the business. Certainly the professional associations and local management must be aware that there are general concerns over what journalists learned in their educational experiences and a desire for specific training opportunities while they are on the job. The question is not whether journalists desire more training nor what it is they want to know. The question is who will be responsible for journalism education.

WHOSE FIRST AMENDMENT IS IT: SOME COMPETING VIEWS

> "Many of us have become convinced that the greatest danger to a free press is not Supreme Court rulings that close courtroom doors, not courts that send reporters to jail for not revealing the source of their confidential information, not legislatures that pass overly broad privacy laws, and not administrative agencies that close their records. Rather we believe it is the lack of public concern about such rulings and laws that present the greatest danger to the flow of information and ideas upon which a free society depends."
>
> --Jean H. Otto,
> First Amendment Congress, 1980

> "People are very sophisticated in their knowledge and evaluation of the media."
>
> --Michael Burgoon,
> First Amendment Congress, 1980

> "People do not have any ideas what is news. We are the professionals and know what is good for them."
>
> --A working journalist, 1981

In journalists' bid to become independent of political pressure and civic bias, they may be becoming elitists, risking alienation of the public they are supposed to serve.

In reviewing the totality of the survey and interview results, we have come to the conclusion that a fair number of journalists feel aloof from the public and have little true regard for it. These attitudes manifested themselves in such findings as:

--cynicism about the public's intelligence;

--isolation from community life and feedback;

--underestimation of the public's demand for news;

--overestimation of the public's desire for titillation;

--rejection of public input into newspapers;

--arrogance about the news person's role as a gatekeeper;

--acknowledgement of feelings of being out of touch and holding different values;

--rejection of research as a means of increasing public feedback.

In some newsrooms, the public-be-damned attitude seemed to reach siege mentality. Some news people reveled in their rejection of public feedback or any encroachment on their independence, even by supervisors.

Thus, a significant issue raised by this study is how the profession is to fulfill its role as seeker of truth and facilitator of the free flow of ideas without losing touch with the public it is supposed to serve. The danger apparent in news people who communicate largely with each other, reject public scrutiny and belittle the people they're supposed to serve is one of eroding support for their First Amendment privileges.

This study shows Jean Otto is only partially correct in her assertion that the lack of public concern about the free flow of information and ideas is the greatest danger to a free press. An even greater danger lies in many journalists' feelings that the greatest threat to their freedom is interference from the public they are supposed to serve. This report has shown many journalists to be out of touch with the communities they serve. And for many, this is a state of affairs they would prefer to maintain.

While professional newspaper organizations have made admirable attempts to educate the people on what the First Amendment means, they have failed to educate their staffs to believe that the First Amendment belongs to the people and not to them.

While much of the data highlighted indicators of insularity and elitism among reporters, responsibility also must be shared with management. Although managers have a better understanding of the newspaper's mission, some show as much disdain for the public as do staff members. What also becomes apparent is that so many editors have become accountants, labor negotiators and crisis managers that their day has ended before they can deal with news issues.

When discussing the issues raised about the First Amendment views of working journalists with a group of people variously concerned with the newspaper industry, a senior researcher commented that prior research on other occupational groups had uncovered similar patterns regarding superior-subordinate relationships, job satisfaction and professional attitudes. It was the sort of comment meant to suggest that this was really not unexpected and that it was merely surprising to some because such research had not been conducted on journalists before. An editor quickly and forcefully gave an opposing view:

> "Nonsense. No auto worker ever claimed First Amendment protection for the right not to do his job as he should."

So the question of whose First Amendment it is must be addressed by policy makers concerned with the media. Many news people are convinced it is their own, and perhaps believing it makes it true. The newsroom can be a bastion for the arrogant, the insular and the indifferent.

It can be, and in many cases is, a vehicle for protecting the First Ammendment rights of the people. As Dan Rather of CBS said at the First Admendment Congress in 1980, reporters have wrongly made the First Amendment issues seem like a journalistic fight. But he quoted his colleague Eric Sevareid as remarking, "There is no such thing as saying, 'My end of the boat is sinking'."

While we aren't sure anything is sinking, we are convinced that much could be gained by accepting the fact that the people have more of a vested interest in keeping a free press afloat than many working journalists concede.

APPENDIX A

TECHNICAL NOTE

Sample and Sample Design

A total of 489 newsroom people completed the written questionnaire while 187 people were interviewed in a face-to-face setting. All data were collected from September to December, 1981, at the eight newsroom locations by members of the Michigan State University research team. All newsroom personnel in each of the locations were encouraged to fill out the written questionnaires. Prior to each site visit, the research team provided the local editor with a list of people to be scheduled for face-to-face interviews. A list of alternates was also provided in case conflicting work schedules prevented a person from being interviewed.

Approximately half of the face-to-face interviewees were selected because of the position they held in the newsroom. Executive, managing and section editors were always included in the sample, while the remaining interviewees were drawn randomly from employee lists provided by the editors. Respondents were interviewed singly, in pairs or in groups of three by one or more members of the research team.

Description of Sample

The 489 people who completed the questionnaire represented a broad cross-section of demographic characteristics and experiences in the industry. Following is a summary of the distributions of demographic and job-related characteristics of the respondents.

Table 6.1

Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Percent
Gender	Male	67%
	Female	33%
Age	Less than 25 years	8%
	25-34	41%
	35-44	21%
	45-54	18%
	55 and over	12%
Education	High school or less	4%
	Some college	18%
	B.A./B.S.	64%
	M.A./M.S.	14%
	Ph.D.	1%
Type of College Degree	Journalism:	
	Reporting/News/ Editorial	49%
	Mass communication	3%
	Other	4%
	Nonjournalism:	
	English	19%
	Liberal arts/ Humanities	10%
	Social Sciences	4%
	Business	2%
	Other	9%
Would Like Additional Training	Yes	65%
	No	35%

Characteristic	Category	Percent
Present Job Title	Reporter	31%
	Copy Editor	16%
	Columnist/Staff Writer	13%
	Publisher/Executive Editor/ Managing Editor	6%
	Supervising Editor (Section, Ass't.)	21%
	Other	13%
Years in Newspaper Industry	Under 3 years	9%
	3-5 years	14%
	6-10 years	25%
	11-20 years	26%
	Over 20 years	26%
Years in Present Job	Under 3 years	49%
	3-5 years	19%
	6-10 years	14%
	11-20 years	11%
	Over 20 years	7%
Promoted in Last Two Years	No	64%
	Yes, once	25%
	Yes, more than once	11%
Merit Raise in Last Two Years	No	46%
	Yes, once	17%
	Yes, more than once	37%

Description of Sample Locations

The eight locations were selected for inclusion in this study on the basis of the following criteria:

1) geographic (regional) balance
2) urban/non-urban locale
3) publication cycle
4) circulation
5) size of market (in terms of households or population)
6) degree of competition from other newspapers and market dominance
7) degree of competition from other media

8) presence or absence of a guild
9) presence or absence of a readership committee or ombudsman
10) size of newspaper staff
11) ownership arrangement (group or independent) and history
12) presence or absence of VDT system

The eight newsrooms were chosen to achieve a mix of characteristics across these several criteria. That variety was achieved is evident from the brief descriptions of each location, including the pilot test site, that follow.

> New London Day: Located in Connecticut, this nonunionized evening newspaper has an independent trust arrangement. It has approximately 60 employees in the newsroom and serves a community of around 59,000 households in its primary market area. It is the dominant newspaper with about 69% market penetration but faces competition from nearby dailies and weeklies as well as the New York metropolitan papers. Its VDT system has been in place for about six years for editors, but only 2 months for reporters.
>
> Wilmington Morning News & Evening Journal: These two papers in Delaware provide the other northeastern newsroom. The papers have been part of the Gannett Group since 1978 and were privately owned previously. They have a single, nonunionized newsroom of 164 employees. The papers have a combined circulation in their market, which includes the entire state, of about 130,000. Market penetration in their home county is roughly 75%. The evening paper is dominant. There is limited competition from other daily papers but some from weekly newspapers. Cable TV is available but there are no local TV stations.
>
> Cleveland Plain Dealer: This midwestern morning newspaper has a weekday circulation in excess of 400,000. Its city zone penetration at the time of the study was around 52%. It has been owned by Newhouse for 14 years. Its guild newsroom has 225 employees. Primary local competition came from the Cleveland Press (before its demise), with a large number of other suburban dailies and weeklies also circulating in its market. Several local TV channels are available and cable has just become available.
>
> Wichita Eagle-Beacon: Now one newspaper, this morning publication has a total statewide circulation in Kansas of around 125,000. It dominates its market with 70% weekday penetration of its city zone, which has over 150,000 households. The guild newsroom has 140 employees. At the time of the study, only an editing system was in place, with VDTs anticipated in the newsroom in the spring. Cable TV, local TV stations and radio all provide competition from electronic media. The paper is owned by Knight-Ridder.
>
> Lansing State Journal: This pilot location serving the state capital of Michigan is the third midwestern location. The paper publishes in the evening, with a weekday circulation of around 75,000. It dominates its market, with some competition coming from the Detroit metropolitan papers, local television and radio, and cable. The nonunionized newsroom has 57

employees and had had VDTs in place only three years at the time of the study. The newspaper has been a part of the Gannett Group since 1971 and was previously owned by another group.

The Independent and Daily Mail: These two newspapers are published in Anderson, South Carolina, which is a community of 119,000 people. The morning paper has a circulation of 41,000; the afternoon paper is the smallest in the study, with a circulation of 7000. Together, the two newspapers completely penetrate their market. The nonunionized news staffs total 54 employees. There is a readership committee and VDTs have been in place for four years. The newspapers are owned by Harte-Hanks. Many weeklies circulation in the market and there are two nearby TV stations but none locally.

Tampa Tribune: This morning paper in the "new South" has been owned by Media General for 15 years and was previously family owned. It has a daily circulation of 205,000 and dominates its market with home county penetration of 51%. Its primary competition comes from its sister paper, the Tampa Times. Several other metropolitan and suburban papers also circulate in the area, which is well-served by 5 local and 2 educational TV stations but no cable. VDTs have been in place over 5 years. The nonunionized newsroom has over 200 employees.

San Diego Union: This western paper, owned by Copley, is a morning publication with 216,000 weekday circulation in a primary market of 1.8 million people. It is the dominant newspaper, with primary market penetration of around 37%. Its sister newspaper, The Tribune, also circulates in the area, as do some other metropolitan and many suburban papers. The guild newsroom has roughly 200 employees. VDTs have been installed for 4 years and the newspaper has an ombudsman.

Wenatchee World: This evening newspaper in the mountains of Washington serves a community of 30,000 people. Its circulation is 38,000 newspapers and its market penetration in its city zone is 87%. Its nonunionized newsroom has around 25 employees. The paper is independently owned and has a VDT system. Competition from other media is limited.

Data Analysis Techniques

Throughout this report, data typically appear in the form of percentages or means. Percentages are usually based on the total number of people who were asked a particular question. For example, the statement, "9% of survey respondents are newcomers to the industry" describes the total number of newcomers as a percent of the total population, or 100%. Sometimes percentages will be reported within subgroups, as in "65% of supervising editors see their jobs as routine," in which case the base is only that subgroup of respondents. (Because fractions have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, some totals may be slightly below or above 100%.)

While percentages are useful, they often are difficult to interpret, especially when trying to compare several questions or several groups. A more useful statistic is the mean, which is the average or "central" response (computed by adding up all the different responses and dividing by the total number of responses.) The use of means permits more precise and powerful comparisons when comparing questions or groups.

One of the most important benefits of the data analyses reported here is that relationships bewteen responses and groups are examined, rather than looking at replies in isolation. To uncover meaningful relationships three general analytic techniques have been used. These will be described briefly here to aid the user of this report in making his or her own interpretations.

The first technique is tests of differences among groups. Means or percentages for one group may appear to be different from those of another group, but often those differences are merely chance fluctuations. However, statistical techniques are available to determine when differences truly exist between two or more numbers. Where statistically significant differences have been found across locations (i.e., the differences are not due to chance), these have been noted in the tables with asterisks (*). Other nonchance differences are noted in the text.

When differences in means are reported, tests of significance used were the t-test for comparisons between two groups and analyses of variance for comparisons among three or more groups. Where significant differences have been reported using percentage data, chi square tests were computed. In all tests of difference, a probability level of .05 was used, indicating that such differences are so large as to only occur 5 out of 100 times by chance alone.

The second technique is correlation, which looks at the association between two variables. A positive relationship means that as one variable increases, so does the second. For example, the statement that "readership of professional publications is positively associated with support for research" means that as the number of publications read increases, attitudes toward research become increasingly favorable also. A negative (or inverse) relationship means that as one variable increases the other one decreases. For example, there is a negative correlation between age and insularity: As age increases, insularity declines. The method used for computing correlations was the Pearson product-moment correlation. The probability level was again .05.

The third statistical method is stepwise multiple regression. In simple terms, this looks for that combination of variables that has the strongest relationship with a criterion variable. The criterion variable, for example, may be "job satisfaction." Among other possible variables -- age, length of time in industry, position, attitudes toward supervisors, etc. -- those which ought to have the strongest correlations with the criterion variable are identified as "predictors." The goal, in other words, is to identify which of those variables best predict the behavior or the criterion variable. For example, it might be found that access to research is a good predictor of job satisfaction. The method begins by identifying the best predictor and continues on through the second best, third best, and so on, always adding that variable which provides the most new information. The analysis stops when adding new variables does nothing to improve the ability to make accurate predictions. The term "variance accounted for" indicates how successful the combinations of predictors are in predicting the criterion variable. If the variance accounted for were 100% (highly improbable), it would mean that one could perfectly predict an outcome just by knowing the information about the predictor variables. For example, by knowing the age and sex of a person, it might be possible to accurately predict his or her job satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis is useful because it identifies the subset of factors that truly make a difference in the behavior of interest and rank orders those factors in terms of importance.

In conducting multiple regression analyses in this project, the following criteria were used:

The overall F due to regression had to be significant ($p < .05$), as did the F value for each individual variable when first entered into the model. All analyses of the relationship between predictors and outcome measures were then done by analyzing the beta weights for each predictor in the model.

Sample Error

Given the final sample size for the questionnaire (N=489), the overall error due to sampling is approximately as follows:

For percentages of about 50 = ± 5.0%
For percentages of 30 or 70 = ± 4.7%
For percentages of 20 or 80 = ± 4.0%
For percentages of 10 or 90 = ± 3.0%

These percentages represent two standard errors; therefore the chances are greater than 95% that the true percentages lie within a range equal to the reported percentage plus or minus the sampling error reported above.

APPENDIX B

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

Newsroom Employee:

The following questionnaire is part of a research project being conducted by a team of researchers from the Department of Communication at Michigan State University, under the sponsorship of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). This project is designed to assess the attitudes of practicing journalists employed in a variety of newsrooms across the country. The issues of interest in the project include the definition of news, factors both internal and external to the newsroom which influence this definition, the usefulness of current readership research conducted by the newspaper industry, the effects of electronic news processing technology (e.g., CRTs, VDTs) and organizational variables, such as leadership style, communication patterns, and job expectations.

In each newspaper, the entire newsroom staff is asked to participate in this assessment by completing the following questionnaire. As a follow-up to this questionnaire, a limited number of individual, face-to-face interviews will be conducted by the research team. In these interviews, the issues addressed in the questionnaire will be discussed in greater length and depth with the newsroom employee. You are encouraged to answer all the questions in both the questionnaire and interview thoughtfully and honestly, as all your answers will be held in the strictest confidence. No member of the ASNE organization, its research committee, the editors, publishers and reporters of the participating newspaper or anyone except the Michigan State University research staff will see the answers you provide.

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to raise them with a member of the research team. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Cordially,

Michael Burgoon
Dr. Michael Burgoon
Professor of Communication

Judee Burgoon
Dr. Judee Burgoon
Associate Professor and
Director of Graduate Studies

Charles Atkin
Dr. Charles Atkin
Professor of Communication

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Newsroom Survey

This survey asks you to make a number of different types of responses. Some questions ask for your feelings about certain issues, while others request that you make a judgment about the way in which your organization or people operate. Frequently you will be asked to make your response using a scale which ranges from 1 to 5 -- for example, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, or from not at all influential to very influential. In these cases, you may circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, depending on your opinion. If you are neutral, in-between, or uncertain, you should circle number 3.

Try to answer each question as candidly and accurately as possible. All answers will be strictly confidential. It is important that every question be answered.

1. A central issue we are trying to address is what constitutes news, and how one decides what should be in the newspaper. Briefly, what is your personal working definition of "news"?

2. How has your conception of what constitutes news changed since the time you entered the profession? (circle answer)

NOT AT ALL   SLIGHTLY   SOMEWHAT   VERY MUCH

3. In your day-to-day job, how influential is each of the following on your concept of what is newsworthy? (circle one number for each; 1 = not at all influential, 5 = very influential, or you may choose any number in between).

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL				VERY INFLUENTIAL
your peers on the staff	1	2	3	4	5
your supervisors	1	2	3	4	5
your friends and acquaintances ...	1	2	3	4	5
your journalistic training	1	2	3	4	5
findings of readership research ..	1	2	3	4	5
news sources	1	2	3	4	5
priorities of network news and prestige newspapers	1	2	3	4	5
local competing news media	1	2	3	4	5

4. To what extent do you think each of the following share your definition of what is newsworthy?

	VERY SIMILAR DEFINITION				VERY DIFFERENT DEFINITION
reporters on the staff	1	2	3	4	5
supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
copy editors	1	2	3	4	5
publisher	1	2	3	4	5
readers	1	2	3	4	5
leaders in the community	1	2	3	4	5

5. Below are a series of news topics and types of stories that appear in newspapers. For each one, indicate what priority you think it should receive on a day-to-day basis by assigning a priority rating from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Then, indicate what priority you think is most prevalent at your newspaper, using the same scale from 1 to 5. Write the numbers in the blanks.

YOUR PRIORITY	PAPER'S PRIORITY	
_____	_____	local news
_____	_____	state news
_____	_____	national news
_____	_____	international news
_____	_____	interpretive background stories
_____	_____	investigative reports
_____	_____	analysis of long-term social trends
_____	_____	breaking news
_____	_____	news already reported by broadcast media
_____	_____	routine government news
_____	_____	service news columns (like Help columns)
_____	_____	news of scandals and corruption
_____	_____	features on people and lifestyles
_____	_____	business and finance coverage

6. Which types of news seem to be given greater play by your newspaper today compared to several years ago?

7. What specific types of stories or topics do you feel your newspaper over-emphasizes and under-emphasizes relative to their news value?

OVER-EMPHASIZED:	UNDER-EMPHASIZED:
a.	a.
b.	b.
c.	c.
d.	d.

8. Earlier we asked about the influences on your personal conception of news. Now we would like to know what factors influence the dominant conception of what is news in your newspaper. Rate each of the following:

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL				VERY INFLUENTIAL
readers who directly communicate with the paper	1	2	3	4	5
the general readership	1	2	3	4	5
local elected officials	1	2	3	4	5
non-elected community leaders	1	2	3	4	5
reporters	1	2	3	4	5
supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
your advertising department	1	2	3	4	5
public relations department	1	2	3	4	5
competing local print media	1	2	3	4	5
competing local broadcast media	1	2	3	4	5
national network TV news media	1	2	3	4	5

	NOT AT ALL INFLUENTIAL				VERY INFLUENTIAL
wire services	1	2	3	4	5
newsmagazines (Time, Newsweek)	1	2	3	4	5
"national newspapers"(New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
news sources	1	2	3	4	5
readership committee or ombudsman ...	1	2	3	4	5

9. Below are several attributes often associated with the quality of a news story. How would you rank them? Rank from 1 (highest) to 6 (lowest), with no ties:

RANKING:
______ accuracy
______ depth
______ impartiality
______ investigative enterprise
______ literary style
______ sophistication of treatment

10. When you judge the editorial quality of a newspaper, how important are each of these attributes? For each one, give a rating score between 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT				VERY IMPORTANT
size of news hole	1	2	3	4	5
high readability of content	1	2	3	4	5
high ratio of news compared to feature stories	1	2	3	4	5
number of political columnists	1	2	3	4	5
diversity of political opinion	1	2	3	4	5
high ratio of staff-written copy compared to wire and feature service copy	1	2	3	4	5
attractiveness of layout	1	2	3	4	5
number of journalism prizes won ...	1	2	3	4	5
accuracy of reporting	1	2	3	4	5
amount of in-depth reporting	1	2	3	4	5

11. For each of these statements, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree. If you strongly agree, circle 5; if you strongly disagree, circle 1. You may use any score in between to reflect degree of agreement or disagreement.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
At this newspaper, breaking news gets more emphasis than reporting of long-range trends.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally, my newspaper is willing to allocate resources for in-depth analysis.	1	2	3	4	5
It seems to me that this newspaper is more concerned with today's happenings than with developing a larger perspective on social currents.	1	2	3	4	5
On the whole, I prefer covering breaking news as opposed to doing in-depth investigatory work.	1	2	3	4	5
In the future, newspapers will increasingly stress stories with long-term perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5

12. Below are a number of adjectives and phrases that have been used to describe newspapers. For each pair of words or phrases, please rate your newspaper as you see it:

INACCURATE	1	2	3	4	5	ACCURATE
DOESN'T HAVE THE LATEST NEWS	1	2	3	4	5	HAS THE LATEST NEWS
NOT COURAGEOUS	1	2	3	4	5	COURAGEOUS
IMPERSONAL	1	2	3	4	5	PERSONAL
CAN'T BE TRUSTED	1	2	3	4	5	CAN BE TRUSTED
NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'S WELL-BEING	1	2	3	4	5	CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'S WELL-BEING
DOES SENSATIONALIZE	1	2	3	4	5	DOESN'T SENSATIONALIZE
DULL	1	2	3	4	5	LIVELY
NOT RESPECTED	1	2	3	4	5	RESPECTED
DOESN'T ACT AS A COMMUNITY WATCHDOG	1	2	3	4	5	DOES ACT AS A COMMUNITY WATCHDOG

NOT INFLUENTIAL	1	2	3	4	5	INFLUENTIAL
DOESN'T CARE WHAT THE READER THINKS	1	2	3	4	5	DOES CARE WHAT THE READER THINKS
INCOMPETENT	1	2	3	4	5	COMPETENT
DOESN'T REPRESENT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY	1	2	3	4	5	REPRESENTS THE WHOLE COMMUNITY
BIASED	1	2	3	4	5	UNBIASED
UNINTERESTING	1	2	3	4	5	INTERESTING

13. For each of the following statements, please indicate your agreement or disagreement:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
The image of our paper is declining.	1	2	3	4	5
We are making headway in regaining readers' interest and confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
It is likely that we will lose readers, relative to our population growth, in the next five years.	1	2	3	4	5
I am optimistic about the future of print journalism in our community.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that readers in the future will more and more turn to other media that better meet their needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel this newspaper has been making progressive changes in content and format.	1	2	3	4	5

14. The next section deals with audience research conducted for or by the newspaper industry.
On the whole, how soon do you find out about newspaper research findings?

_____ BEFORE ANYONE ELSE
_____ BEFORE MOST PEOPLE ON THE STAFF
_____ ABOUT THE TIME EVERYONE ELSE DOES
_____ AFTER EVERYONE ELSE
_____ ALMOST NEVER

15. Indicate whether you agree or disagree:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
I make an effort to stay abreast of current newspaper industry research.	1	2	3	4	5
In general, my newspaper encourages the dissemination of current research findings among the staff.	1	2	3	4	5
Findings of current research conducted on the newspaper industry often affect the decisions made in our newsroom.	1	2	3	4	5
If I were responsible for the budget of my newspaper, I would favor spending more money on research.	1	2	3	4	5

16. I would characterize newspaper industry audience research as:

INVALID	1	2	3	4	5	VALID
USELESS	1	2	3	4	5	USEFUL
WORTHLESS	1	2	3	4	5	BENEFICIAL
UNNECESSARY	1	2	3	4	5	NECESSARY

17. Have you read or heard about the national Newspaper Readership Project?

NO YES ------ IF YES: Have you seen any of the research reports from that project?

SEVERAL ONE OR TWO NONE

18. Which of the following publications do you read *regularly*? (Mark each one that you read on a regular basis)

_____ Academic publications (e.g., *Journalism Quarterly*, *Newspaper Research Journal*)

_____ Critical reviews (e.g., *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Washington Journalism Review*)

_____ Public opinion poll reports in magazines and newspapers (e.g., Harris, Gallup, Yankelovich)

_____ *Editor and Publisher*

_____ *ANPA News Research Report*

_____ *Quill*

_____ *Presstime*

_____ *Editor's Exchange*

_____ *ASNE Bulletin*

_____ *APME News*

19. Newspapers frequently attempt to measure the reading preferences and opinions of the audience. Have any surveys of readers been done for your paper?

YES, SEVERAL   YES, ONE OR TWO   NO, NEVER   NOT SURE

IF YES: Have you ever seen or heard about the findings from such readership surveys?

NO, NEVER   YES, ONCE OR TWICE   YES, MORE THAN TWICE

IF YES: In what form do you receive readership information? (Circle all that apply)

WRITTEN FULL-LENGTH REPORTS

MEMOS OR BRIEF SUMMARIES

RESEARCHERS' ORAL PRESENTATIONS

DISCUSSIONS WITH SUPERVISORS

CONVERSATIONS WITH CO-WORKERS

OTHER:______________________

20. What do you think is the appropriate use of readership surveys? (Mark each one)

To help determine what types of stories are newsworthy..... YES NO ??

To help decide which features to publish .... YES NO ??

To help plan changes in format and layout .... YES NO ??

To help provide information to advertisers about audience.. YES NO ??

21. If newspapers were guided by readership surveys in deciding what news to cover, do you think that important news would go uncovered?

NOT AT ALL   POSSIBLY   PROBABLY   DEFINITELY

22. In the last several years, many newsrooms have introduced new technology and word processing equipment (e.g., CRTs, VDTs). This section examines the impact of these new technologies on your work. Has your newspaper introduced electronic news processing technology?

YES, WITHIN PAST TWO YEARS   YES, MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO   NO

IF NO: Skip to Q. 25

IF YES: Answer the next two questions

23. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about electronic news processing technology:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
I am satisfied with the way electronic news processing technology is used at this newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
The training I received in how to use the new technology was adequate.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable with my ability to operate the new technology that my job requires me to use.	1	2	3	4	5
The presence of new technology has significantly reduced the amount of discussion among reporters and editors.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, the introduction of new technology has made my job more pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5

24. In my opinion, the introduction of electronic news processing technology has proven very beneficial for.....

.... the newspaper overall	1	2	3	4	5
.... me	1	2	3	4	5
.... supervising editors	1	2	3	4	5
.... the reporters	1	2	3	4	5
.... copy editors	1	2	3	4	5
.... the production staff	1	2	3	4	5
.... the readers	1	2	3	4	5

25. The next set of statements relates to your communication with others. Again, indicate whether you agree or disagree.

I rarely discuss news events with non-journalists.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a lot of contact with people in walks of life very different from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of my friends are associated with the newspaper business in one way or another.	1	2	3	4	5
My co-workers frequently discuss their stories with me.	1	2	3	4	5

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
My editor and I frequently discuss the content of various stories.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel that discussion of news events is best kept in the office.	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly seek out the nonjournalists' opinions about the news.	1	2	3	4	5
I am involved with a variety of groups and people in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
I think journalists should be involved with community groups and activities.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek out information from bulletin boards, memos, and other internal communications to find out what's happening at the newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
I socialize frequently with other members of the newspaper staff.	1	2	3	4	5
Nonjournalists often ask my opinion about things in the news.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I am tolerant of criticism about how our newspaper covers the news.	1	2	3	4	5

26. This next section asks about your conceptions of the reading audience for your newspaper. Try to estimate the answers to the following questions:

What proportion of the adults living in the metropolitan area do you think read your newspaper on an average day?

_____% read paper on average day

What proportion do you think read the paper all five weekdays last week?

_____% read all five weekdays

For the typical front page hard news article, what proportion of newspaper readers do you think read the whole article?

_____% read whole article

For the typical front page hard news article, what proportion read just the first few paragraphs but don't go on to finish the article?

_____% read just the first few paragraphs

How many minutes per day do you think the average reader spends reading your newspaper?

_____ minutes per day

27. We would like you to estimate the proportion of readers who are very interested in each of the following types of news:

PERCENT VERY INTERESTED	TOPIC OF NEWSPAPER ITEM
_______%	State and local government news
_______%	General local news
_______%	International news (wars, diplomacy)
_______%	National government news
_______%	Economic news and issues (cost of living, taxes)
_______%	Crime news
_______%	Education and schools
_______%	Accidents and disasters
_______%	Social problems and protests
_______%	Science, invention, and space
_______%	Environment and energy
_______%	Celebrities and personalities
_______%	General human interest (non-local)
_______%	Consumer information and advice
_______%	Religion
_______%	Sports
_______%	Business and finance
_______%	Fashion, society, food, and home

28. Which subgroups of the population do you think read your newspaper most frequently? In each case, circle the subgroup who reads most heavily. (If you think there is little difference, circle "equal")

Age level	18-29	30-49	50+	EQUAL
Income	Under $15,000	$15-25,000	$25,000+	EQUAL
Race	WHITES	MINORITIES	EQUAL	
Sex	MALES	FEMALES	EQUAL	

Education .... HIGH SCHOOL SOME COLLEGE COLLEGE GRAD EQUAL

Length of residence
in this city .... ONE YEAR TWO-TEN YEARS MORE THAN TEN YEARS EQUAL

29. If the readers of your newspaper were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the paper along a scale from 1.0 (very dissatisfied) to 5.0 (very satisfied), what do you think the average score would be? (circle answer)

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

30. How would the readers rate their satisfaction with the coverage of national and international news?

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

31. How would they rate their satisfaction with the coverage of local news?

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

32. Here are some statements about the reading audience in your community. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each item by circling a score from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
The public has more confidence and trust in our newspaper than in television news.	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of newspaper readers are more interested in hard news items than in soft news and features.	1	2	3	4	5
The way the newspaper plays the news influences the public's priorities regarding which issues, leaders, and events are considered most important.	1	2	3	4	5
Most readers prefer to read a few in-depth stories than a number of shorter items.	1	2	3	4	5
People who watch a lot of TV news are less likely to read the newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
Women less often read hard news coverage than do men.	1	2	3	4	5
"News of record" such as engagements, divorces, and court activities is no longer of high interest to readers.	1	2	3	4	5

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
Readers are more interested in the day's breaking news than in analysis of long-term trends.	1	2	3	4	5
Most readers trust the fairness and accuracy of the news carried in our newspaper.	1	2	3	4	5
Most readers can't distinguish local enterprise stories from wire-service stories.	1	2	3	4	5
The majority of readers have little interest in reading about social problems such as racial discrimination and poverty.	1	2	3	4	5
People read our newspaper because they have no other alternative.	1	2	3	4	5
Our readers are gullible and easily fooled.	1	2	3	4	5
Our newspaper has an important impact on the attitudes readers form toward political and social issues.	1	2	3	4	5
Most readers of the newspaper read the editorial page regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
The attractiveness of layout and graphics in the newspaper is important to most readers.	1	2	3	4	5

33. Earlier, you estimated the proportion of the people in your city who read the newspaper on an average weekday. What proportion do you think watch dinner-time network newscasts and local newscasts on television?

_____% watch any network TV newscasts on average weekday

_____% watch any local TV newscast on average weekday

34. Here are some items dealing with the newspaper where you work. First, what are the most important jobs in the newsroom, in terms of the quality of the product? Please rank from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest) with no ties.

_____ copy editors
_____ local columnists
_____ reporters
_____ staff writers
_____ supervising editors

35. Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
My superiors in this newspaper share my values.	1	2	3	4	5
My superiors think like me.	1	2	3	4	5
The readers of this newspaper share my values.	1	2	3	4	5
The readers think like me.	1	2	3	4	5
When I have a problem, I generally seek out my immediate supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5
This paper has a unified editorial approach.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a hard time satisfying the conflicting demands of people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5
There is a difference between the way my supervisor thinks things should be done and the way I think they should be done.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor allows me extensive freedom to plan and organize my work.	1	2	3	4	5
The editorial policy of this newspaper usually reflects my views.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor insists that I stick to my job and leave decisions and planning to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
My supervisor always insists that I solve my own work problems, but is available to advise me if I should need it.	1	2	3	4	5

36. Listed below are words and phrases that may describe your current job. For each item, either circle Y (for Yes) if it describes your job, N (for No) if it does not describe your job, or ? if you can't decide: (Do both columns)

The work that I do is......	Fascinating	Y	N	?	Useful	Y	N	?
	Routine	Y	N	?	Tiresome	Y	N	?
	Satisfying	Y	N	?	Healthful	Y	N	?
	Boring	Y	N	?	Challenging	Y	N	?
	Good	Y	N	?	Important	Y	N	?
	Creative	Y	N	?	Frustrating	Y	N	?
	Respected	Y	N	?	Simple	Y	N	?
	High pressure	Y	N	?	Endless	Y	N	?
	Pleasant	Y	N	?	Gives a sense of accomplishment	Y	N	?

Before having you complete the last section asking about some of your personal characteristics, we would like to stress that all of your responses are strictly confidential. Only members of the Michigan State University research staff will see the answers.

37. What is your sex?

MALE FEMALE

38. What is your age?

UNDER 25 YEARS 25-34 35-44 45-54 55 +

39. How long have you worked in the newspaper industry?

UNDER 3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS 6-10 YEARS 11-20 YEARS OVER 20 YEARS

40. How long have you held your present job?

UNDER 3 YEARS 3-5 YEARS 6-10 YEARS 11-20 YEARS OVER 20 YEARS

41. What hours do you usually work each day?

TIME BEGIN ______ TIME END ______

42. What is your present job title? (Circle one)

REPORTER

COPY EDITOR

COLUMNIST/
STAFF WRITER

PUBLISHER/EXEC EDITOR/MANAGING EDITOR/EDITOR

SUPERVISING EDITOR (SECTION/ASSISTANT EDITOR)

OTHER ______________________

43. What was the highest academic degree you have received?

HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS

SOME COLLEGE OR A.A.

B.A. OR B.S.

M.A. OR M.S.

PH.D.

44. If you attended college, how large was the institution you received your highest degree from?

UNDER 15,000 15,000-25,000 OVER 25,000

45. IF YOU HAVE A JOURNALISM DEGREE: What was your area of emphasis?

REPORTING/NEWS/EDITORIAL
ADVERTISING/PUBLIC RELATIONS
BROADCAST JOURNALISM
PHOTOJOURNALISM
MASS COMMUNICATION
OTHER ____________________

46: IF YOU HAVE A NON-JOURNALISM DEGREE: In what area did you major?

ENGLISH
SOCIAL SCIENCES
NATURAL SCIENCES
LIBERAL ARTS/HUMANITIES
BUSINESS
TECHNICAL
OTHER:
____

47. In terms of its adequacy in preparing you for newspaper work, how valuable was your academic training?

VERY WORTHLESS 1 2 3 4 5 VERY VALUABLE

48. Would you like additional training in journalism, new electronic media, or other subjects?

NO YES ----- IF YES: What type of training would you want?

____

From what persons or institutions would you like to receive this training? (Please, no abbreviations)

____

49. Have you been promoted in the last two years?

NO YES, ONCE YES, MORE THAN ONCE

50. Have you received a merit raise in the last two years?

NO YES, ONCE YES, MORE THAN ONCE

51. Have you received any formal evaluation in the past year?

NO YES ------ IF YES: How were you rated?

VERY NEGATIVELY 1 2 3 4 5 VERY POSITIVELY

52. How thoroughly do you read your newspaper each day?

READ ALL OF IT READ MOST OF IT IN BETWEEN READ SOME READ NONE

53. Which newspapers other than your own do you read regularly? (Please list)

54. How many days a week do you watch the network newscasts on TV?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DAYS

55. How many days a week do you watch local newscasts on TV?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 DAYS

56. How many different magazines do you read at least once a month?

_______ MAGAZINES

57. Please list the magazines that you read regularly:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. We would like to begin by focusing on your personal definition of what is news. What makes a story newsworthy to you... which characteristics of an event or a development give it high news value?

2. SHOW PERSON THE LEAD STORY FROM THE DAY'S NEWSPAPER AND ASK: How newsworthy is this particular story? Why?

3. GIVE PERSON CARDS CARRYING FIVE STORIES FROM THE A-SECTION OF YESTERDAY"S PAPER AND INSTRUCT THEM: Please rank order these stories in terms of the degree to which each is newsworthy in your personal view.

   A __________ B __________ C __________ D __________ E __________

4. Using your rankings as a starting point, we would like to delve more into what makes some stories newsworthy and others not. Since stories typically report on the who, what, when, where, and why of an event, we'd like to use this framework.

   First, the who in a story... What makes the people in these five stories newsworthy? In general which people should get the most play in your newspaper (e.g., certain office-holders, business executives, local leaders, personalities)?

5. Second, what topics are important to cover... What makes these stories in particular worth covering? Generally speaking, which specific topics do you think are the most important to cover in the newspaper?

   PROBE: How important are novelty and unexpectedness?

   PROBE: Do features belong in the paper? IF YES: To what extent?

   PROBE: How newsworthy are press conferences, press releases, and events staged specifically to attract news coverage? Why?

   PROBE: To what extent do you feel your newspaper should stress items providing information the public ought to know versus items that the public wants to read?

   PROBE: Do you perceive that the number of hard news stories in your newspaper has been increasing or decreasing over the past few years? IF YES: Why do you think this has occurred? How do you feel about it?

6. Third, when... how important is the immediacy or timeliness of an event?

   PROBE: After how long does a story become stale? For example, if a story broke right after yesterday's deadline, how prominently should that story be treated in today's paper?

   PROBE: Compared to breaking news, how newsworthy are articles that analyze long-term trends and provide in-depth perspective?

7. Fourth, where... which datelines are most newsworthy? Is local news more important to cover than national news? Why?

   PROBE: What should be the relative priority of news from the rest of the state?

   PROBE: What types of news from foreign countries are most important to cover? Why?

8. Finally, why... to what extent is the explanation behind an event important? Should a news story stress background interpretation or concentrate on reporting details of an event itself?

   PROBE: Should readers be told explicitly why an event is important?

9. On a day-to-day basis, how are decisions at your paper actually made about high versus low priority news items? Who decides which topics actually merit coverage?

10. To what extent are decisions in assigning priority influenced by these factors:
    --The agenda set by the wire services?

    --Ideas that are generated by reporters?

    --Ideas that flow down to reporters?

    --Initiatives from the public at large?

    --Local leaders who direct attention to certain issues?

    --Daily staff meetings?

    --Findings from readership surveys?

    PROBE: Do you think the newspaper's decision-making is primarily reactive (in the sense of decision-makers responding to events carried on the wire or police blotter items in publicity releases) or proactive (where news personnel take the initiative in digging up stories)?

11. (STAFF) When you are writing (editing) stories, who are you writing (editing) for... what target audiences do you have in mind... your peers, your sources, your superiors, the average reader, or who?

12. To what extent does the nature of beat assignments structure what is news?

13. How much discussion takes place in the newsroom about what should and should not be investigated or reported? PROBE: Are the decisions made in editorial meetings-- about what goes in the paper and where it is played-- explained to the staff?

14. (Asked of half the sample)
Does your newspaper have a policy that defines what is newsworthy?
(STAFF) How is that policy communicated to you?
(MANAGERS) What steps have been taken to articulate the paper's definition of news? Has this been effective

15. How much feedback do you receive from readers? To what extent does it affect news decisions and assignemnts?

16. How great an influence does the editor have on deciding what is news on a day-to-day basis?

17. There are several kinds of editors in the newspaper business. One kind of editor tries to exert great influence on the staff and takes an active role in daily decision-making, while another kind might play a more passive role as a coordinator or facilitator. How much effect can a single editor with strong views have on what appears on a day-to-day basis in the newspaper? Why?

    PROBE: (STAFF) For which type of editor could you work most effectively? Why?

18. (Asked of half the sample)
At the time you obtained your formal education, did you develop a clear definition of what is newsworthy?

    PROBE: Was this a journalism education?

    PROBE: What were some of the key concepts of this definition?

19. (Asked of half the sample)
In the questionnaire, we asked whether your definition of news is shared by others. How much consensus is there among personnel at the newspaper regarding newsworthy stories?

    PROBE: (STAFF) Are there any areas that you think are news that people in management discourage you from covering?

20. Much concern has been expressed by the newspaper industry about the substantial number of nonreaders and drop-outs who stop reading the newspaper. What do you think the main factors are that are responsible for nonreadership?

    PROBE: Are people turned off by the newspaper or the news itself?

21. Do you feel there are some audience segments in your area that are not being served adequately by the newspaper? What can be done to better serve them?

22. Which audiences are best served by the newspaper? Why?

23. Which parts of your newspaper do you think the readers are most satisfied with? Least satisfied? Why?

    PROBE: (MANAGERS) Do you believe your staff has a good feel for your readers?

24. (Asked of half the sample)
In the questionnaire, we asked you your opinions on the use of VDTs and other electronic data processing equipment in your newsroom. What do you like and dislike about it? Why?

PROBE: What effect, if any, does it have on news gathering and decision-making?

25. (Asked of half the sample)
To what extent do you think the newspaper influences public opinion on local issues? Is this impact primarily due to news stories or editorial commentary?

26. (Asked of half the sample)
In what ways has television news affected newspapers... Has the timeliness of a story become less crucial in deciding whether to cover it?

27. (Asked of half the sample)
Has television news made the public more accustomed to briefer news stories, so they prefer news-in-brief rather than deeper coverage... or do people now go to newspapers to get extra detail and depth?

28. (Asked of half the sample)
Is TV, either news or entertainment, responsible for the decline in newspaper readership?

29. (Asked of half the sample)
Do you think the public trusts newspaper news more or less than television news? Why?

30. (Asked of half the sample)
Occasionally, there is unfavorable publicity in the news media about journalism, such as evidence of fabricated stories, complaints of news coverage bias, or controversies regarding pre-trial publicity. Do you feel such stories are newsworthy?

PROBE: Are these stories given the appropriate amount of play?

PROBE: Do you think such publicity affects the public's attitudes toward journalists? How?

31. (Asked of half the sample)
Next we have some questions about readership surveys. Have you seen or heard about findings from these surveys? IF YES: Did you find the information understandable?

32. (Asked of half the sample)
What do you see as the problems and pitfalls of relying on readership surveys?

33. (Asked of half the sample)
How do you think the results of these surveys affect decisions made at your newspaper? Should they influence them to a greater extent?

34. Does your newspaper have a readership committee? IF YES: What does it do? What role does it play in determining what gets printed?

35. We have covered a number of issues related to what is news and what affects news coverage. Is there anything that we haven't asked you that you think we should know?

Research Report

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. 485 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017

CIRCULATION AND HOME DELIVERY PATTERNS

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

November 1983

NATIONAL STUDY OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ITS AUDIENCES

PREFACE

In May 1982, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau designed and carried out a nationwide survey of the readership of daily newspapers. The field work was conducted by Audits & Surveys, Inc. with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. The questionnaires used in the interview covered a wide range of topics: newspaper reading, television viewing, exposure to news media, readers' content preferences, ratings of the performance of the daily paper, circulation patterns, and detailed demographic information.

As part of the interview, newspaper readers were also taken through a copy of the paper they read yesterday, or the one they usually read, and asked about their readership of or interest in specific editorial and advertising items on sampled pages in that paper. These items were coded in several ways: size, use of text or illustrations, location in the paper, etc.

The results of this survey are presented in a series of detailed reports dealing with circulation issues, news habits of the American public, page traffic and ad readership, attitudes about the performance of the daily press, and the content and readership of news and features. A separate technical report on the survey, prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc., that contains copies of the questionnaires used in the study, is also available.

This report was written by Thelma Anderson.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1977 national study, How The Public Gets Its News, demonstrated that the daily newspaper's impressive reach on an average weekday largely depends on home delivery. Most frequent readers have home delivery, but most infrequent readers do not. With the decline in retail outlets, and with the increase in problems in home delivery, there has been a growing concern in the industry with how to build subscription levels and how to maximize street sales.

Some research on single copy sales has tracked daily fluctuations, testing particular sales tactics and front page differences. Other studies have surveyed single copy buyers. These have suggested that except when there is a special news event, single copy buying follows habitual patterns. In 1981 a three-city study of single copy buying was conducted by the NAB for the Newspaper Readership Project. This confirmed that buying papers on selected days is related to special sections or features, sometimes as the only paper read and sometimes to supplement the home-delivered paper. But it also found that frequent readers are more likely to turn to single copy buying because of home delivery problems, and that newspaper drives for subscriptions were less intense in non-competitive markets.

The present study examined, on a national basis, two subjects of concern to circulation people: home delivery and single copy buying. The report which follows provides an analysis of subscribers and single copy buyers, and highlights differences by publishing cycle and market size.

The section on home delivery includes a description of the carriers, satisfaction with home delivery, previous experience with home delivery, and the extent to which readers have been solicited for home delivery. The section on single copy buying reports the frequency of such buying, the availability of outlets, and the kinds of places at which newspaper readers prefer to buy single copies.

This report of behavior and attitudes toward home delivery and single copy buying presents a broad national picture. But demographic and distribution factors affecting home delivery and street sales vary from city to city, and for different papers within each city. As with all national studies, the findings in this report will provide useful insights for all newspapers, but the findings may not be directly applicable to a specific newspaper or market.

HIGHLIGHTS

Importance of Home Delivery: Home delivery is clearly the cornerstone of regular newspaper reading. Whereas 87% of those who have home delivery read a paper yesterday, only 52% of non-subscribing newspaper readers did so. Home delivery also develops the newspaper reading habit in children. Children were reported to have read a newspaper yesterday in 37% of subscribing households but in only 21% of non-subscribing households.

Incidence of Home Delivery: Nine out of ten adults read a daily newspaper at least some of the time, and 71% of this reading public has home delivery. 63% have weekday delivery and 60% have a Sunday paper delivered. Most subscribers (72%) receive both daily and Sunday newspapers.

Home delivery of a daily newspaper is highest in the suburbs (61%) and in non-metropolitan areas (60%) and lowest in central cities (47%). It is highest in high income and education brackets, among adults over 45, married people, home owners and long-time residents. It is low among blacks, low income people, the unmarried, people under 30, and those who live in high-rise apartments.

Sunday home delivery is more uniform. Whereas older readers, married people and long-time residents have a higher dedication to their daily paper, their opposite numbers--the young, unmarried, newcomers--are just as likely to have Sunday as daily home delivery. It is only among blacks, a large proportion of whom buy single copies of the daily paper, that Sunday subscription, though low, is more widespread than daily subscription.

Although morning circulation outstrips the circulation of afternoon papers, afternoon papers were favored by a close margin over-all for home delivery. (30% report morning delivery and 32% have afternoon delivery.) In part this is due to the fact that home delivery is more prevalent in smaller metropolitan areas, where afternoon papers predominate. In larger markets (1 million or more), where morning papers predominate, morning papers are favored for home delivery. Single copy buying follows the same pattern. That is, single copy sales make up a larger proportion of the circulation of morning papers in larger cities and of afternoon papers in smaller cities and non-metropolitan areas.

Carriers: Adult carriers are used most often in non-metropolitan areas. Juvenile carriers are used most often in the suburbs, and for afternoon deliveries. Having an adult or juvenile carrier makes no difference in satisfaction with delivery service. It is noteworthy that quite a few don't know their carrier, especially if he or she delivers a morning paper (16%).

Satisfaction with Home Delivery: Most subscribers are very satisfied with their weekday delivery service. Non-metro residents, who are more likely than others to receive their papers by mail, are somewhat less satisfied than other subscribers. So, too, are subscribers who work full time.

But about one in five subscribers have cancelled their subscription at some time because of poor delivery service. And service problems are the major reasons cited by frequent readers who are non-subscribers. It is the infrequent reader--who, to be sure, predominates among non-subscribers--who cites lack of interest or not having time to read as the reason for not subscribing.

Service problems were mentioned most often by city residents, by those in the Northeast, by blacks, and by long-time residents. And service failure was the primary reason for not subscribing among high income families.

Marketing Home Delivery: 45% of the non-subscribers have not been asked to subscribe to a daily newspaper at their present address. Those who have been neglected tend to be the people who are less likely to subscribe: people under 30, the less affluent and less well-educated, newer residents, and people in the Northeast. An earlier three-city study of single copy buying also indicated that there was less soliciting of subscriptions in non-competitive markets. To some extent, then, it is apparently lethargy as well as a judgment about promising targets which limits the amount of soliciting that is conducted in person, by mail, or by phone.

Single Copy Buying: Although nine out of ten adults say there are convenient places where they can buy single copies, only 39% ever do so. These are 71% of the non-subscribers, but also 20% of those who have home delivery.

Only one-fifth of those who buy single copies do so every day. 13% buy a paper almost every day, 21% buy a paper two or three or four times a week. But 26% buy only once a week and 19% do so less often. Even among non-subscribers, who buy single copies more often than subscribers, only 22% buy a paper every day.

Among yesterday readers, the proportion who bought their papers varies from day to day. Confirming what circulation people know, it was lowest on Mondays and highest on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Bought Copies Taken Home: 84% of the single copy buyers said they usually take home the papers they buy. This confirms findings in studies of individual newspapers.

Machines vs. Retail Outlets: Stores or newsstands are greatly preferred over coin-operated machines or racks in all segments of the population and by those who buy papers frequently as well as those who buy infrequently. They are most highly preferred in the Northeast, where single copy buying is concentrated, and where retail outlets still prevail. The earlier three-city study revealed that one of the reasons retail outlets are preferred is that they provide better newspaper service as well as more variety, choice and "appetite appeal." This suggests that every effort should be made to provide retail outlets. And with the decline of such outlets, it becomes increasingly important to improve and expand home delivery.

DETAILED FINDINGS

HOME DELIVERY

Home Delivery and Newspaper Readership

There is a strong relationship between home delivery and regular newspaper reading. Whereas almost nine out of ten adults who have home delivery read a newspaper yesterday, only half who do not have home delivery did so. A similar relation obtains for Sunday newspaper reading: among those who have home delivery, 82% read four or more issues in the past four weeks, compared with only 35% of those who do not have the Sunday paper home delivered.

Table 1

Newspaper Readership by Presence of Home Delivered Papers[a]

	Have home delivery	No home delivery
Weekday readership by weekday home delivery:		
Read yesterday	87%	52%
Did not	13	48
	100%	100%
Sunday readership by Sunday home delivery:		
Read 4 or more issues, past 4 weeks	82%	35%
Read 1-3 issues	15	29
Read none	3	36
	100%	100%

[a] Unless otherwise noted, the tables shown throughout this report do not include the 10% who said they never read a daily or Sunday newspaper. Assuming that most of them do not have home delivery, if they were included in table 1 the readership figures for those who do not have home delivery would be even lower. The bases for the total sample and newspaper readers are shown in the Appendix.

Home delivery is also important for developing the newspaper reading habit in children. Respondents were asked how many children in the household under the age of 18 read or looked at a newspaper yesterday. Children were reported to have read a newspaper yesterday in 37% of subscribing households, but in only 21% of non-subscribing households.[1]

Table 2

Newspaper Readership by Children in Subscribing and Non-Subscribing Households

	Have home delivery	No home delivery
Children read yesterday	37%	21%
Did not	55	70
Don't know, no answer	8	9
	100%	100%

Although this is based on the adults' reports, it is consistent with what children themselves reported in the study of "America's Children and the Mass Media"--that those with regular access to a newspaper at home are better newspaper readers.[2]

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[1] A validation study of the primary respondent's report of newspaper reading by other adults in the households in the present study found agreement in five out of six cases. Among the remainder, under-reporting of actual reading by others exceeded over-reporting. This finding confirms the reliability of reports by adult witnesses to the reading habits of others in the household.

[2] See Children and Newspapers, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980.

The Prevalence of Home Delivery

Newspapers are read by 90% of the adult population, and 71% of these readers have home delivery. 63% have home delivery of a daily newspaper and 60% have home delivery of a Sunday newspaper; in the total adult population these figures are 57% and 54% respectively.

Most people who subscribe receive both daily and Sunday newspapers (72%). Of the remainder, 16% receive only a weekday paper and 12% receive only a Sunday newspaper by home delivery.

Table 3

Weekday and Sunday Home Delivery

	Total Sample		Total Readers		Total Subscribers
TOTAL WEEKDAY DELIVERY	57%		63%		88%
TOTAL SUNDAY DELIVERY	54%		60%		84%
Weekday and Sunday	46%		51%		72%
Weekday only	11	65%	12	71%	16
Sunday only	8		8		12
Neither, no answer	35[a]		29		--

[a] Includes newspaper non-readers, (10% of all adults), who were not asked about home delivery in 1982.

When compared with the [illegible] figures on home delivery obtained in the national study, "How the Public Gets Its News," there has been a small drop in the proportion who have any home delivery--from 68% to 65%. However, although weekday and Sunday home delivery have both dropped overall, there has been more of a decline in weekday delivery (from 64% to [illegible]) than in Sunday home delivery (from [illegible] to 54%). Moreover there has been a doubling of those with Sunday delivery only, from 4% to 8%. These changes parallel the trend in Sunday vs. daily circulation figures: whereas daily circulation has risen by roughly 2% since 1977, Sunday circulation has risen by 7%.[1]

Table 4

Comparison with Home Delivery in 1977[a]

	1982	1977[b]
Weekday and Sunday delivery	46%	52%
Weekday only	11	12
Sunday only	8	4
Neither, no answer	35	32
	100%	100%

Base = Total Sample

[a] Comparison with the 1977 study is limited by differences in questions asked: In 1977 all respondents were asked about home delivery, but in 1982 it was not asked of those who never read newspapers. It is assumed in this table that they do not have home delivery.

[b] Source: The Home Delivery Population: Characteristics and Readership Patterns, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978.

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[1]

	1982	1977
Total Daily Circ. (000)	62,487	61,495
Total Sunday Circ. (000)	56,261	52,429

Source: Editor and Publisher International Yearbook. Prepared by Newspaper Advertising Bureau, July 1982.

Who Subscribes to Newspapers?

Home delivery is widespread among most segments of the population (table 5). The proportion with home delivery of a daily newspaper is particularly high among those in the highest income and education brackets, among adults over 45, married people, those who own their own homes, and long-time residents.

There are, however, several demographic groups in which daily home delivery falls below the 50% mark: blacks, those with family incomes under $10,000, the unmarried, renters, and those who are under 30.

Sunday home delivery is more uniform. Differences are somewhat smaller between younger and older readers, between blacks and whites, between married and unmarried, and between newcomers and longer residents than is the case for dailies.

To look at it differently, comparing the incidence of Sunday and weekday home delivery within each group helps to identify the groups with greater dedication to their daily papers. Thus, older readers are more likely to have daily than Sunday delivery, but this is not so for the younger ones. Similarly there is somewhat more weekday than Sunday home delivery among married people, but not the unmarried, and among long-term residents, not newcomers. It is only among the black population that Sunday subscription, though low, exceeds daily subscription. As will be seen later, a very large proportion of blacks buy their daily papers as single copies. Black newspaper readers tend to be central city residents; a higher proportion of sales of papers in larger central cities is accounted for by single-copy buyers.

Table 5

Home Delivery of Newspapers by Demographic Characteristics

	Total Sample[a]		Total Readers	
	Weekday Delivery	Sunday Delivery	Weekday Delivery	Sunday Delivery
	%	%	%	%
TOTAL	57	54	63	60
18-24	42	41	48	48
25-29	42	45	48	52
30-34	52	50	58	55
35-44	58	57	63	61
45-54	69	66	77	74
55-64	67	59	72	63
65+	67	58	75	65
Men	54	54	62	61
Women	59	53	64	58
College grad.	65	65	68	68
Some college	60	61	65	66
H.S. grad.	55	51	61	56
Less than h.s. grad.	49	42	60	52
$35,000 and over	71	71	74	74
$25,000-$34,999	64	61	68	65
$15,000-$24,999	58	54	64	59
$10,000-$14,999	49	49	56	56
Under $10,000	37	33	44	40
White	61	56	66	61
Black	29	39	36	49
Total Employed	55	54	61	60
Full time	55	54	61	60
Part time	55	55	60	60
Not employed	59	53	65	59
Homemaker	59	49	66	55
Married	64	59	70	64
Formerly married	46	46	54	53
Never married	42	44	49	50
Children 17 or under	55	52	61	58
No children present	58	55	65	61
5 years or more	61	57	68	62
4 years or less	39	43	45	49
Own home	68	62	74	68
Rent home	28	32	34	38

[a] Bases include newspaper non-readers, who were not asked about home delivery.

Home Delivery of Newspapers by Market Characteristics

Home delivery of daily newspapers is highest in the suburbs (61%), about as high in the non-metropolitan areas (60%), and lowest in central cities (47%). By city size, the big distinction is between cities of one million and over, and those which are smaller: in the largest cities only 48% have home delivery (table 6).

In regional terms, home delivery of daily newspapers is lowest in the Northeast (50%) and highest in the North Central states (60%) and the South (59%).

Weekday home delivery to different types of dwellings is generally predictable and is consistent with metro area and regional differences in home delivery. It is highest in separate single houses, which prevail in suburbs, appreciably lower in multi-family and attached row houses, and lowest of all in apartment houses. Indeed it is extremely rare in apartment houses with six floors or more. It is interesting that home delivery is more prevalent in mobile homes than in apartment houses. This reflects the fact that mobile homes--which are most prevalent in North Central states where home delivery is strong--now represent a different type of housing. They no longer imply a high degree of mobility, but rather a more easily financed way of obtaining relatively inexpensive permanent housing, although some are considerably more elaborate than was the case in years past.

Although home delivery of the Sunday paper is somewhat lower overall ([illegible] vs. [illegible] for the daily paper), this varies with some of the market characteristics we have measured. Thus, home delivery of the Sunday paper is *far* less the rule in non-metropolitan areas, where there are fewer

Sunday papers: 60% have a weekday paper delivered, but only 41% have a Sunday paper delivered. The same is true in North Central states generally, where 60% have daily delivery and only 51% have Sunday delivery.

In the largest metropolitan areas--where single copy buying is heaviest--there is slightly less daily than Sunday home delivery. And for the metropolitan areas overall, this holds true in the suburbs as well as central cities.

Table 6

Home Delivery of Newspapers by Market Characteristics

	Total Sample[a]		Total Readers	
	Weekday Delivery %	Sunday Delivery %	Weekday Delivery %	Sunday Delivery %
TOTAL	57	54	63	60
Metro 1,000,000+	48	53	56	62
Metro 250,000-999,999	67	65	72	70
Metro 50,000-249,999	61	64	66	68
Metro central city	47	50	52	55
Metro suburbs	61	64	70	72
Non-metro	60	41	66	45
Northeast	50	50	53	53
North Central	60	51	66	55
South	59	59	67	66
West	55	53	65	62
Separate single house	63	59	69	65
2 or 3 family house	43	40	50	47
Row house	41	47	47	53
Apt., 5 floors or less	21	26	28	35
Apt., 6 floors or more	[illegible]	14	[illegible]	15
Mobile home	13	18	42	23

[a] Bases include newspaper non-readers, who were not asked about home delivery.

Morning vs. Afternoon Home Delivery

Although total morning circulation outstripped the circulation of afternoon daily newspapers in 1982,[1] the incidence of home delivery was slightly larger overall for afternoon papers than for morning papers: among the 63% of readers who had home delivery, 30% reported morning delivery and 32% reported afternoon delivery (table 7).[2]

In the largest cities (one million and over), home delivery of morning papers predominates, since these are the markets in which morning papers predominate. However, the ratio of morning to afternoon daily home delivery in big cities, shown in table 7 (33%:23%), is much closer than the ratio of a.m. to p.m. daily circulation in cities over 1,000,000 (4.2:1),[3] since single copy sales make up a sizeable proportion of their

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[1] Daily Newspaper Circulation, 1982

Morning	33,174,087
Evening	29,313,090

Source: Editor & Publisher International Yearbook
(In these figures circulation of "all day" papers is equally divided between AMs and PMs.)

[2] 1% failed to indicate whether their paper was delivered before or after noon.

[3] Based on 1982 figures reported in 1983 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook:

Net Paid Circulation, Sept. 1982 (in 000s)
(by Population Groups)

Population	Circulation AM	Circulation PM
More than 1,000,000	9,144	[illegible]
500,001 to 1,000,000	5,947	2,182
100,001 to 500,000	12,275	8,137
50,001 to 100,000	1,914	4,452
Less than 50,000	[illegible]	12,097

morning circulation. The balance in favor of afternoon delivery increases in successively smaller cities, as does actual circulation. But again the morning-to-evening ratio of home delivery differs from the circulation ratio. Thus, in population areas of under 50,000 (non-metro), where the circulation of evening papers is more than three times greater than that of morning papers, 38% have home delivery of an afternoon paper, compared with 26% for the morning paper. That is, in non-metropolitan areas single copy sales would appear to account for a sizeable proportion of total afternoon circulation.

Geographic variations reflect the city size composition of the regions. There is far more home delivery of morning papers in the West (40% vs. 25%) where the population is concentrated in urban areas. In the Northern states--eastern as well as central--there is somewhat more home delivery of the afternoon paper. Southern respondents indicated an even balance in home delivery.

Table 7

Home Delivery of A.M. and P.M. Newspapers by Market Characteristics

	A.M. Delivery %	P.M. Delivery %
TOTAL	30	32
Metro 1,000,000+	33	23
Metro 250,000-999,999	33	38
Metro 50,000-249,999	29	36
Metro central city	27	25
Metro suburbs	36	35
Non-metro	26	38
Northeast	23	30
North Central	27	37
South	33	33
West	40	25
Separate single house	33	35
2 or 3 family house	23	28
Row house	27	19
Apt., 5 floors or less	16	12
Apt., 6 floors or more	-	2
Mobile home	21	21

Variations by population segments (table 8) are, of course, correlated with demographic variations with city size.[1] Thus home delivery of afternoon papers was particularly strong among 55-64 year-olds and those who were not high school graduates--groups more prevalent in smaller cities. Correspondingly, home delivery of morning papers was strong among the demographic segments more prevalent in large cities: high income households and college graduates. And although people under 30 and recent residents are less likely to have any home delivery of a daily newspaper, those who do are more likely to take a morning paper.

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[1] See Daily Newspaper Audiences: An Analysis of Four Circulation Size Groups, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1981.

Table 8

Home Delivery of A.M. and P.M. Newspapers by Demographic Characteristics

	A.M. Delivery %	P.M. Delivery %
TOTAL	30	32
18-24	25	23
25-29	27	20
30-34	23	35
35-44	29	33
45-54	38	38
55-64	30	41
65+	38	36
Men	31	30
Women	30	34
College grad.	41	26
Some college	31	33
H.S. grad.	29	31
Less than h.s. grad.	24	35
$35,000 and over	42	31
$25,000-$34,999	32	36
$15,000-$24,999	31	33
$10,000-$14,999	26	29
Under $10,000	20	24
White	32	34
Black	20	16
Total Employed	29	31
Full time	29	31
Part time	28	30
Not employed	32	32
Homemaker	29	36
Married	33	37
Formerly married	27	26
Never married	26	22
Children 17 or under	30	31
No children present	31	33
5 years or more	32	35
4 years or less	26	18
Own home	32	35
Rent home	15	13

Previous Weekday Home Delivery

Non-subscribing newspaper readers were asked whether they had ever had home delivery of a daily newspaper. 60%--comprising 22% of all readers--said they had. Only 14% of the newspaper reading public said they had never had home delivery. (Table 9)

The incidence of lapsed subscribing is more uniform through the various segments of the population than is the incidence of never having had home delivery. For example, approximately one in five people at each educational level are lapsed subscribers, but whereas one in five (19%) on the lowest educational level has never had home delivery, this is true of only 9% of the college graduates. Similarly, although the proportion of lapsed subscribers is approximately the same among city residents and suburbanites, and among blacks and whites, city residents and blacks are three times more likely never to have had home delivery.

Since these segments in which people have had no previous home delivery are the segments in which current home delivery is also weakest, it can be inferred that some prior experience with home delivery is an important foundation for subscribing to a daily newspaper currently. These results also highlight the groups that offer the best opportunity for enlarging the base of daily newspaper subscribers.

Table 9

Current and Past Weekday Home Delivery

	Current Delivery %	Only in the Past %	Never Had %	No Answer %
TOTAL	63	22	14	1
18-24	48	28	22	2
25-29	48	25	23	4
30-34	58	29	11	1
35-44	63	25	11	1
45-54	77	15	8	*
55-64	72	20	7	1
65+	75	14	10	1
College grad.	68	23	9	-
Some college	65	21	13	1
H.S. grad.	61	24	13	2
Less than h.s. grad.	60	20	19	1
$35,000 and over	74	18	9	-
$25,000-$34,999	68	21	10	*
$15,000-$24,999	64	20	14	2
$10,000-$14,999	56	26	15	3
Under $10,000	44	32	22	2
White	66	22	11	1
Black	36	26	34	4
Metro central city	52	24	23	1
Metro suburbs	70	22	7	1
Non-metro	66	18	13	1
Northeast	53	17	26	4
North Central	66	22	12	*
South	67	24	8	1
West	65	25	10	*
Frequent readers	76	14	9	1
Infrequent readers	34	40	24	2

THE HOME DELIVERY EXPERIENCE

How Newspapers are Home Delivered

Most newspapers are of course carrier-delivered, but 4% receive their newspaper by mail and 2% receive newspapers both ways. Mail delivery is most frequent in non-metropolitan areas and in North Central states, where 12% receive at least one of their papers by mail.

Table 10

How Newspapers are Delivered

	Carrier	Mail	Both Ways	N.A.
	%	%	%	%
Total readers who have home delivery	93	4	2	1
Metro central city	97	2	1	-
Metro suburbs	96	1	1	2
Non-metro	86	9	3	2
Northeast	97	1	1	1
North Central	85	9	3	3
South	96	2	1	1
West	96	2	2	-

Half the readers who have home delivery report that their carrier is a juvenile, 35% say he or she is an adult and 10% don't know the carrier's age (because the reader is not necessarily the individual who pays or deals with the carrier). Those who have a morning paper home-delivered are, understandably, far less likely to know who their carrier is (16% vs. 5% for subscribers to p.m. papers). They also report fewer juvenile carriers than afternoon subscribers do. This too is understandable, since after-school paper routes are more convenient for juvenile carriers. Adult carriers predominate in non-metro areas, where distant routes require driving, and in the South (table 11).

Table 11

Juvenile vs. Adult Carriers

	Juvenile %	Adult %	D.K. age %	Mail %	N.A. %
Total with Home Delivery	50	35	10	4	1
Before noon	42	36	16	5	1
After noon	57	34	5	1	3
Metro central city	51	33	14	2	-
Metro suburbs	61	26	10	1	2
Non-metro	32	49	8	9	2
Northeast	78	16	4	1	1
North Central	60	24	3	9	4
South	27	54	16	2	1
West	49	34	14	2	1

Satisfaction with Present Weekday Delivery Service

Most subscribers are very satisfied with their weekday delivery service, whether their carrier is an adult or a juvenile. This is an important finding because of the increasing use of adult carriers with bigger routes.[1] Non-metro residents, who are more likely to receive their papers by mail, are slightly less satisfied. Also those who are employed full-time are marginally less often satisfied. But the high levels of satisfaction apply to both a.m. and p.m. newspaper subscribers (Table 12).

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[1] See Circulation Department Practices, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980.

Table 12

Satisfaction with Weekday Delivery Service

	Very	Fairly Well	Not	D.K./ N.A.
	%	%	%	%
Among:				
Total who have home delivery	72	23	2	3
Juvenile carriers	72	23	3	2
Adult carriers	74	23	2	1
Don't know age	75	23	2	-
Mail	63	21	6	10
Metro central city	75	23	1	1
Metro suburbs	74	21	2	3
Non-metro	67	25	4	4
Employed full time	69	26	3	2
Employed part time	77	18	1	4
Not employed	73	22	2	3
A.M. paper subscribers	73	23	2	2
P.M. paper subscribers	72	23	3	2

Reasons for Not Subscribing

The reasons why people do not have home delivery were explored in several ways. First, non-subscribers were asked whether they had been asked to subscribe at their present address. Those who had been solicited were then asked why they had refused. And, finally, both subscribers and non-subscribers were asked whether they had ever cancelled specifically because of poor service.

Been asked to subscribe? As many as 45% of the non-subscribers have not been asked to subscribe to a daily newspaper either in person, by mail, or by phone, at their present address. In general, the incidence of

Table 13

Non-Subscribers: Have you been asked to subscribe at present address?

	Yes	No	N.A.
	%	%	%
TOTAL	54	45	1
18-24	43	57	*
25-29	45	55	*
30-34	54	43	3
35-44	64	31	5
45-54	60	39	1
55-64	66	31	3
65+	58	42	-
College grad.	65	34	1
Some college	55	43	2
H.S. grad.	54	45	1
Less than h.s. grad.	45	52	3
$35,000 and over	70	28	2
$25,000-$34,999	62	37	1
$15,000-$24,999	51	48	1
$10,000-$14,999	53	45	2
Under $10,000	39	58	3
Metro central city	46	54	-
Metro suburbs	76	21	3
Non-metro	34	63	3
5 years or more	57	41	2
4 years or less	46	53	1
Northeast	40	57	3
North Central	65	34	1
South	50	48	2
West	66	33	1
Frequent readers	50	48	2
Infrequent readers	57	42	1

soliciting parallels the incidence of newspaper subscribing. Thus there has been less individual soliciting among non-subscribing city dwellers, only 46% of whom have been asked, compared to 76% of suburban non-subscribers. (Non-metro residents--though more likely to be subscribers than city residents--are least likely to be sought out.) Others who have been neglected in subscription drives are people under 30, the less affluent and less well-educated, newer residents, and people in the Northeast. Whether deliberately or by default, the less promising prospects and those who are less easily serviced tend to be neglected.

Reasons for not subscribing last time asked: The 54% of the non-subscribers who said they had been asked to subscribe were then asked why they had decided not to (Table 14). One-third (34%) indicated a lack of interest in reading a newspaper, explicitly, or by implication in saying they had no time to read.[1] They included a small number (5%) who were not interested in reading that paper. Then there were 20% who spoke of the cost. It can be assumed that this reason is not unrelated to lack of interest, since the consumer would economize on low priority items.[2]

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[1] See Changes in the Frequency of Newspaper Reading: Who Changes and Why?, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980, for an analysis of time pressure and other reasons as cause of reduced reading frequency.

[2] In fact one-fourth of those who mentioned cost also indicated no interest. (Table not shown.)

Table 14

Reasons for Deciding Not to Subscribe Last Time Asked
(Base: Non-subscribers who have been solicited)

Lack of interest in paper (net)		34%
General lack of interest in reading a newspaper	14	
No time to read	13	
Not interested in that paper; only read that paper certain days	5	
Other lack of interest mentions	5	
Can't afford, cost reasons		20
Service problems (net)		22
Home delivery not dependable	13	
Home delivery too late	3	
Home delivery is sloppy	4	
Paper gets lost or stolen	2	
Other service problems	4	
Prefer to buy (net)		14
Like buying paper on way to work/at work/ on way home	8	
Rather buy at store/newsstand	4	
Other prefer to buy mentions	3	
Prefer to buy, unspec	3	
Not always home (net)		4
Not at home to receive, away during day	1	
Out of town a lot	1	
Other not always at home mentions	2	
Billing/Collecting problems (net)		3
Not at home when carrier comes to collect	1	
Other problems	2	
All other mentions		21
Total[a]		122%

[a] Total exceeds 100% because more than one category of answer was possible.

A second set of reasons had to do with what might be called the mode of delivery. A sizeable proportion (22%) of the group queried spoke of service problems, emphasizing in particular that home delivery is not dependable. And 14% said they preferred to buy their papers at a store or newsstand, or on their way to or from work, which may imply some dissatisfaction with home delivery. Although billing and collecting problems may be a nuisance, very few mentioned them as reasons for not subscribing.

The four primary categories or reasons are shown by demographic and readership characteristics in Table 15. As might be expected, lack of interest and cost reasons were given by infrequent readers and by low income people. They were far less likely to mention poor service or a preference for buying the paper.

It was reported earlier that those who currently subscribe are rather uniformly satisfied with their delivery service. Naturally, those who are sufficiently dissatisfied with delivery service would simply cancel it. The answers to the present question--though asked only of those who had been asked to subscribe--sheds light on what kinds of people have been lost to home delivery because of poor service. Among the non-subscribers who are frequent readers, one-third (35%) refused when solicited because of past service problems, and one in five (22%) said they preferred to buy their newspaper. Service problems were mentioned more often by city dwellers than by those who lived in suburbs or non-metro areas, by people in the Northeast, and by long-time residents. They comprised the primary reason for non-subscribing among high income families, who, like long-time residents, are more frequent readers and are most likely to have had subscriptions over a longer period of time in the past.

Table 15

Major Reasons for Not Subscribing by Background Characteristics of Non-Subscribers Who Have Been Solicited

	Percent who mention:			
	Lack of Interest	Cost Reasons	Service Problems	Prefer to Buy
	%	%	%	%
TOTAL (non-subscribers who have been solicited)	34	20	22	14
18-24	44	25	18	8
25-29	33	13	19	15
30-34	33	27	18	13
35-44	41	18	25	19
45-54	33	12	24	15
55-64	28	23	34	9
65+	15	21	16	15
$35,000 and over	22	6	37	18
$25,000-$34,999	39	18	31	22
$15,000-$24,999	27	16	20	13
$10,000-$14,999	43	30	13	4
Under $10,000	39	35	15	3
White	35	21	21	13
Black	27	14	32	17
Metro central city	33	19	31	9
Metro suburbs	37	18	17	16
Non-metro	29	27	17	17
5 years or more	32	18	24	15
4 years or less	41	27	15	10
Northeast	33	7	33	16
North Central	33	26	20	15
South	37	23	19	16
West	34	21	16	6
Frequent readers	18	14	35	22
Infrequent readers	45	24	12	8

Ever cancelled because of delivery service? When asked directly whether they had ever cancelled a daily paper subscription because they were dissatisfied with the delivery service, approximately one-fifth of current subscribers as well as non-subscribers said they had done so.

This has occurred somewhat more often among frequent readers and high income people--who are more likely to subscribe--but also among blacks and readers in larger metro areas. And cancellations were more common among those who are employed full time, and among subscribers to morning papers.

Table 16

Percent Who Have Ever Cancelled Because of Delivery Service

	%
TOTAL READERS	20
Frequent readers	22
Infrequent readers	17
Current subscribers	19
Non-subscribers	22
A.M. subscribers	22
P.M. subscribers	17
18-24	17
25-29	19
30-34	26
35-44	25
45-54	25
55-64	18
65+	15
$35,000 and over	26
$25,000-$34,999	23
$15,000-$24,999	20
$10,000-$14,999	17
Under $10,000	16
Employed full time	24
Employed part time	18
Not employed	17
White	20
Black	28
Metro central city	21
Metro suburbs	24
Non-metro	13
Metro 1,000,000+	26
Metro 250,000-999,999	19
Metro 50,000-249,999	19

The responses to these three questions on reasons for not subscribing are consistent with the results of an earlier NAB study of single copy buying in three cities. There too it was found that half of the non-subscribers had not been solicited for home delivery. This was more marked in the non-competitive markets, which suggested that lethargy accounted for the failure to conduct subscription drives. The findings in the present study--that soliciting is more likely to be conducted among those segments where newspaper subscribing is heavier--suggests further that those defined as less promising prospects and those who are less easily serviced are being neglected.

The single copy buyers interviewed in the three-city study included a sizeable proportion of frequent readers.[1] And many of them said they bought their papers instead of subscribing because of home delivery problems. A sizeable minority also said they would resume delivery service if it were improved. Thus both studies indicate that the frequent newspaper reader demands satisfactory service if he is to maintain a subscription.

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[1] The sample was drawn by intercepting single copy buyers at the time they were buying the paper, which increased the chance of selecting frequent buyers. See Single Copy Buying: A Three-City Study, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

SINGLE COPY BUYING

Yesterday Readers

Three-fourths (74%) of the yesterday readers had obtained their paper by subscription. 18% had bought the paper themselves, and the remaining 8% had obtained it in other ways--bought by others in the family, borrowed, found, etc. (table 17).

A small proportion (10%) of those who bought the paper they read yesterday also had home delivery. In most cases they presumably bought a paper which was not delivered. (In the previously-cited study of single copy buying in three cities it was found that among those who subscribe and also buy single copies, the majority buy a paper which is not delivered. But a sizeable minority of morning subscribers buy the same paper, either to leave the delivered copy at home for others in the family or because of delivery problems.)

The majority of non-subscribers who read a newspaper yesterday bought their own copy at a newsstand (28%) or other type of store (23%); only 12% bought the paper at a vending machine or rack. The remainder--apart from the 9% who have a copy delivered to their office--obtained their copy from someone else. That is, one-fifth borrowed a copy, read a copy brought home by someone else, or picked up a copy left behind by someone else.

Table 17

How Newspaper Read Yesterday Was Obtained
(Based on Yesterday Readers)

	Total	Have home Delivery	No home Delivery[a]
Home delivery	71%	96%	-%
Delivered to office or place of work	3	1	9
Bought at newsstand	8	1	28
Bought at other type of store	7	1	23
Bought at vending machine or rack	3	*	12
Other family member brought home	3	*	7
Borrowed copy from friend/co-worker	3	*	10
Picked up copy somebody else left behind	1	-	2
Some other way	1	*	7
D.K., N.A.	*	-	2
	100%	100%	100%

[a] Includes some who did not answer home delivery question.

Day of week: Table 18 shows that the proportion of non-subscribers among yesterday readers was lowest for Monday papers, and highest for Wednesday and Friday papers. Since the majority of non-subscribers who read yesterday had bought their own copies (63%), to which we might add the 7% who read a copy brought home--and presumably bought--by someone else in the family, this confirms what circulation people are aware of--that street sales are highest on Fridays (with weekend entertainment news), and Wednesdays (usually best food day), and lowest on Mondays.

Table 18

Subscribers and Non-Subscribers Among Yesterday Readers by Day of Week Read

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Subscribers	78%	74%	72%	76%	70%
Non-subscribers	22	26	28	24	30
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Turning this table the other way, subscribers read a paper uniformly through the week, except for a small rise on Wednesday. But among non-subscribers there was considerably more variation in reading from day to day, with markedly less reading on Monday.

Table 19

Yesterday Readers Among Subscribers and Non-Subscribers, by Day of Week Read[a]

	Subscribers	Non-Subscribers
Mondays	83%	42%
Tuesdays	82%	58%
Wednesdays	85%	51%
Thursdays	84%	47%
Fridays	82%	54%

[a] Day of week refers to yesterday. Interviews were conducted Tuesday through Saturday to ascertain Monday through Friday yesterday readership. Thus Tuesday interviews identified Monday readers, etc.

AM or PM editions: Since afternoon daily subscriptions outnumber morning subscriptions[1] it is to be expected that subscribers were more likely to have read an afternoon paper yesterday. But non-subscribers were more prone to have read a morning paper.[2]

Table 20

Edition Read Yesterday by Subscribers and Non-Subscribers

	Subscribers	Non-Subscribers
AM paper	39%	54%
PM paper	51	31
All day paper	10	15
	100%	100%

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[1] See section on morning and afternoon home delivery, page 9.

[2] It may also be observed that this difference between subscribers and non-subscribers is consistent with the finding that frequent readers--more of whom are subscribers--are more likely to read an afternoon paper, and infrequent readers a morning paper:

	Frequent Readers	Infrequent Readers
Read AM paper yesterday	42%	49%
Read PM paper yesterday	46	43
Read All day paper	12	8
Base = yesterday readers	100%	100%

Availability of Single Copy Outlets

Nine out of ten adults say there are convenient places where they can buy single copies of a newspaper if they want to. This is not to say that it is highly convenient to do so, or that they can count on getting the paper they want when they reach the outlet, but most people can, if they wish, buy single copies. This is particularly true in large cities and in the Northeast, but even in other regions close to nine out of ten are aware of convenient places to buy single copies. This awareness is somewhat more characteristic of non-subscribers and younger people, perhaps because they are more mobile, or because they need to know where to buy a paper since they do not have home delivery.

Table 21

Percent Who Say There Are Convenient Places Where They Can Buy Single Copies

	%		%
		Northeast	93
TOTAL READERS	89	North Central	89
Yesterday readers	89	South	89
		West	86
Frequent readers	89		
Infrequent readers	91	18-24	95
		25-29	93
Subscribers	86	30-54	89
Non-subscribers	95	55-64	85
		65+	84
Metro central city	92		
Metro suburbs	89	$35,000 and over	87
Non-metro	87	$25,000-$34,999	93
		$15,000-$24,999	91
Metro 1,000,000+	93	$10,000-$14,999	92
Metro 250,000-999,999	89	Under $10,000	85
Metro 50,000-249,999	86		
		Employed	90
		Not employed	89

Who Buys Single Copies?

Although nine out of ten newspaper readers have convenient locations for buying single copies, only 39% ever do. These include 71% of the non-subscribers, but also 20% of those who have home delivery.

Table 22

Buyers of Single Copies

	Percent who ever buy[a]		Percent who ever buy[a]
TOTAL READERS	39		
Subscribers	20	Employed full time	44
Non-subscribers	71	Employed part time	37
		Not employed	34
Men	46		
Women	33	Metro 1,000,000+	48
		Metro 250,000-999,999	34
White	36	Metro 50,000-249,999	37
Black	67		
		Metro central city	50
18-24	45	Metro suburbs	36
25-29	51	Non-metro	31
30-34	45		
35-44	43	Northeast	53
45-54	31	North Central	32
55-64	33	South	35
65+	26	West	37
Married	34	Five years or more	37
Formerly married	39	Four years or less	46
Never married	54		

[a] Excludes those who said "hardly ever" or "never."

In general, of course more single copy buyers are found in those segments of the population in which home delivery is less prevalent. For example, there are more single copy buyers in the Northeast, in large metro areas, among blacks, central city residents, newcomers, singles and adults under 45. However, there are also more single copy buyers among men than women and among full time employed adults. Since these groups are equally likely to have home delivery, it is clear that men, and employed adults, are more likely to buy a single copy to supplement the paper which is home-delivered.

Frequency of Single Copy Buying

In our earlier three-city study of single copy buying it was found that a large proportion of the non-subscribers who buy single copies do so every day. But that study was based on intercept interviews at newspaper sales points, to permit observing the actual purchase situation (i.e. where the purchase was made and what papers were available) and to ask about the respondent's destination and the purchase decision. Consequently, the infrequent newspaper buyers were under-represented since they were less likely to be encountered at a given time.

The present study permits us to examine the frequency of single copy buying in the population as a whole. Here we find that only one-fifth of those who buy single copies do so every day. Another 13% say they buy a paper almost every day and 21% buy a paper two, three or four times a week. But 26% buy only once a week and 19% do so less often (table 23).

Of course this varies from market to market and would also vary from paper to paper within a single market. Thus single copy buyers in larger metropolitan areas are the most frequent buyers: 27% buy a paper every day (including 3% who buy a paper twice a day). This is about twice the proportion of everyday buyers in smaller cities, where about half the single copy buyers do so only once a week or less often. And in non-metro areas 58% buy a paper only once a week or less often.

Table 23

Frequency of Single Copy Buying by Market Size and by Geographic Region
(Based on those who buy single copies)

	Total	Market Size				Geographic Region			
		Metro 1MM+	Metro 250M-999M	Metro 50M-249M	Non-Metro	North East	North Central	South	West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Every day	21	27	14	16	14	36	16	12	9
Almost every day	13	19	6	12	5	21	11	5	13
2-4 times a week	21	17	29	17	23	14	24	25	25
Once a week	26	20	28	28	37	18	34	30	26
Buy, but less often	19	16	23	25	21	11	15	28	27
Base = total single copy buyers	39%	48%	34%	37%	31%	53%	32%	35%	37%

In regional terms, single copy buyers in the Northeast are the most frequent buyers: 36% buy a paper every day and an additional 21% buy one almost every day. Once-a-week buying--probably best food day--is heaviest in North Central states (34%). And in the South and West there is a larger proportion than elsewhere of less than once-a-week single copy buying.

Subscribers who also buy individual copies (of the same paper or of other papers) do so less often than non-subscribers, but a majority of them buy a copy at least once a week. (The three-city study also found that subscribers buy single copies less often than non-subscribers do, although the percentage levels are different because of the study design.)

Table 24

Frequency of Single Copy Buying Among Subscribers and Non-Subscribers
(Based on those who buy single copies)

	1982 National Study		1981 Three-City Study[a]	
	Non-Subscribers %	Subscribers %	Non-Subscribers %	Subscribers %
Twice a day	2	1	6	2
Every day	20	13	61	39
Almost every day	16	7	14	12
Four times a week	6	3	6	6
Three times a week	8	5	5	10
Twice a week	10	8	5	9
Once a week	23	33	3	6
Buy, but less often	15	30	-	7
No answer	-	-	-	9
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Base = single copy buyers

[a] See Single Copy Buying: A Three-City Study, Newspaper Readership Project, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

Frequency of Single Copy Buying by Background Characteristics

Table 25 shows the frequency of single copy buying according to the background characteristics of the purchasers. In general, the patterns of buying are similar, but some differences do emerge:

--Blacks, who are far more likely than whites to be single copy buyers, also buy them more frequently: 51% of the 67% who buy their papers do so every day or almost every day. Only 30% of the white single copy buyers buy a paper that often.

--Men, who are more likely than women to buy a paper, also buy papers somewhat more often than women: whereas nearly three out of five (58%) buy a paper more often than once a week, only half the women (49%) do so.

--Although full-time employed adults are most likely to "ever buy" single copies, they differ from the part-time and not-employed buyers only in buying at least once a week. This suggests that they are more engaged by a particular section or feature.[1]

--High income buyers ($25,000 and over) are expectably more regular in their buying habits, whereas low income people are inclined to skip a day occasionally.

--Educational level has less bearing on single copy buying: at each level two out of five do buy papers and similar proportions buy copies twice a week or more often.

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[1] The three-city study revealed that much single copy buying is habitual. People usually buy the same paper every day or they buy it on particular days when certain sections or features are published.

--The tabulation by age, where the bases of single copy buyers are relatively small, suggests that the youngest buyers are least likely to buy a paper every day. The smallest proportion of single copy buyers is found among adults over 65, but this group is most committed to buying every day or almost every day, if they buy papers at all.

Table 25

Frequency of Single Copy Buying
by Background Characteristics

	Every day	Almost every day	2-4 times a week	Once a week	Less Often	Base = Total who ever buy[a]
TOTAL	21	13	21	26	19	39%
Men	22	14	22	24	18	46%
Women	18	11	20	29	22	33%
White	20	10	22	28	20	36%
Black	25	26	18	15	15	67%
18-24	12	14	24	29	21	45%
25-29	20	14	21	29	16	51%
30-34	24	16	19	29	12	45%
35-44	17	10	31	24	18	43%
45-54	29	8	17	23	26	31%
55-64	18	17	14	23	28	33%
65+	30	14	16	22	18	26%
College grad.	20	12	17	32	19	41%
Some college	21	11	21	31	16	39%
H.S. grad.	20	15	21	26	18	39%
Less than h.s. grad.	18	13	25	16	28	39%
$35,000 and over	23	5	21	28	23	37%
$25,000-$34,999	24	11	20	30	15	40%
$15,000-$24,999	14	16	24	27	19	39%
$10,000-$14,999	14	14	24	23	25	46%
Under $10,000	14	20	21	27	18	39%
Employed full time	20	11	20	31	17	44%
Employed part time	23	9	22	19	27	37%
Not employed	19	16	21	23	21	34%

[a] Excludes those who never or hardly ever buy single copies.

Taking Home Bought Copies

In the three-city study, eight out of ten of the single copy buyers said they usually took their bought papers home. The present national study confirms that finding: 84% of all single copy buyers said they usually take home the papers they buy.

Table 26

How Often Bought Papers are Taken Home
(Based on those who buy single copies)

Most of the time	84%
Sometimes	7
Rarely or never	7
No answer	2

Base = 39% who buy single copies

This practice is common to all who buy single copies. The figure is only slightly lower for subscribers (78%), high income people (76%) and full-time employed (77%) for whom the bought paper is, or is more likely to be, a second paper (table 27).

Table 27

Percent Who Take Home Bought Paper Most of the Time
(Based on those who ever buy single copies)

	%
TOTAL	84
Subscribers	78
Non-subscribers	87
Frequent readers	83
Infrequent readers	85
18-24	86
25-29	79
30-34	85
35-44	78
45-54	80
55-64	93
65+	91
$35,000 and over	76
$25,000-$34,999	77
$15,000-$24,999	83
$10,000-$14,999	93
Under $10,000	93
College grad.	74
Some college	82
H.S. grad.	85
Less than h.s. grad.	91

	%
Employed full time	77
Employed part time	88
Not employed	91
Men	81
Women	88
Married	81
Formerly married	92
Never married	84
White	85
Black	80
Metro 1,000,000+	82
Metro 250,000-999,999	85
Metro 50,000-249,999	82
Metro central city	84
Metro suburbs	81
Non-metro	89
Northeast	82
North Central	87
South	87
West	78

Preferred Type of Newspaper Outlet

When asked whether they would prefer to buy a newspaper from a coin-operated rack or machine, or from a store or newsstand, 32% said it made no difference. But the remainder expressed an overwhelming preference for over-the-counter purchases: 49% chose store or newsstand and only 19% opted for a rack or vending machine.

In the Northeast--where single copy buying is most heavily concentrated--only 8% prefer the automated purchase; 62% prefer stores or newsstands. In part this may be due to the fact that newsstand and store outlets still prevail in that region. But it is also true that stores and newsstands, in addition to permitting other purchases and providing human contact, facilitate a newspaper purchase because they present no mechanical difficulty and because they provide better newspaper service and more choices.[1]

It is no surprise then that they are more heavily preferred by frequent readers than by infrequent readers, and, as shown earlier (table 17), that the single copy buyers among yesterday readers are five times more likely to buy their copy over a counter than from a rack or machine.

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[1] In the three-city study, the prime advantage single copy buyers attributed to boxes or machines was the speed of purchase. Among the advantages seen in buying a paper at a newsstand or store were that they always had a paper, that the paper was complete and undamaged, and one didn't have to worry about having exact change.

They also said they liked the human contact in buying a paper at a store or newsstand. It is a reasonable inference that the human contact of the counter purchase, in providing the pleasant experience of being recognized and greeted, also leads people to buy a paper regularly. That is, it creates a tie with the vendor that the buyer may be reluctant to break.

Table 28

Preferred Type of Outlet for Buying Paper by Background Characteristics of Readers

	Rack/Vending Machine	Store or Newsstand	Makes no Difference	No Answer
TOTAL	19%	49%	32%	*%
Frequent readers	17	51	32	*
Infrequent readers	22	45	32	1
Subscribers	18	47	34	1
Non-subscribers	20	52	28	*
Men	21	48	31	*
Women	17	50	33	*
18-24	21	50	29	-
25-29	24	42	34	*
30-34	19	51	30	-
35-44	19	54	27	*
45-54	16	48	35	1
55-64	16	46	36	2
65+	16	50	33	1
College grad.	16	54	30	*
Some college	21	48	30	1
H.S. grad.	20	48	32	*
Less than h.s. grad.	15	48	36	1
White	19	50	31	*
Black	16	42	42	-
Employed	21	51	28	*
Not employed	16	47	37	*
Metro central city	23	49	28	*
Metro suburbs	16	51	33	*
Non-metro	18	46	35	1
Northeast	8	62	30	*
North Central	18	51	30	1
South	23	40	37	*
West	25	45	29	1
$35,000 and over	17	51	31	1
$25,000-$34,999	19	51	30	*
$15,000-$24,999	21	48	31	*
$10,000-$14,999	25	42	32	1
Under $10,000	17	50	32	1
5 years or more	17	49	33	1
4 years or less	26	48	26	-

*Less than 0.5%.

Finally, the preference for stores or newsstands holds true for infrequent as well as frequent single copy buyers. Whether they buy a paper every day, once a week, or never, a sizeable proportion expressed no preference, but stores or newsstands were the prevailing choice over racks or machines.

Table 29

Preferred Type of Outlet by Frequency of Single Copy Buying

	Prefer Rack or Machine %	Prefer Store or Newsstand %	Makes no Difference, n.a. %
By Frequency			
Every day	19	54	27
Almost every day	19	45	36
2, 3, 4 times a week	22	54	24
Once a week	23	53	24
Less often	17	48	35
Never	18	47	35

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Home delivery, which is the cornerstone of regular newspaper reading, shows some slippage--more for daily than Sunday home delivery. This may reflect some decline of interest in reading daily newspapers, but it is also due to failure to provide satisfactory service. Although subscribers express a high degree of satisfaction with their home delivery service, dedicated readers who have dropped their subscriptions have done so primarily because of service problems. Obviously this calls for unremitting attention by newspapers to the quality of home delivery service, especially in the face of urban changes (and the shift to suburbs) which exacerbate service problems.

Subscribers are equally satisfied with adult and juvenile carriers, which should be reassuring to newspapers that are shifting to adult carriers. But subscribers to morning papers are not always familiar with the carrier who delivers the early paper. A shift to publishing a morning paper could therefore be accompanied by a loosening of personal ties with the carrier.

Only 54% of the non-subscribers say they have been asked to subscribe at their present address. Although this may under-represent the number of non-subscriber households that have in fact been contacted, clearly a large proportion has been neglected. These tend to be the people who are more difficult to serve or less likely to subscribe. While it may be an efficient marketing strategy to focus on likely prospects, neglecting the less likely prospects may contribute to a growing number of people with less commitment to daily newspaper reading because they have never had home delivery of a daily newspaper.

Single copy buying is the frequent reader's answer to unsatisfactory home delivery and the infrequent reader's answer to being less interested in newspaper reading (or a way of cutting costs on what is less essential to him). Although single copy buying does not encourage daily readership to the same degree that home delivery does, single copy sales do account for a large and growing proportion of circulation. But the trend to providing vending machines or racks instead of retail outlets does not entice the single copy buyer. Frequent readers as well as infrequent readers much prefer stores or newsstands, where there is personal contact, more choice, and better newspaper service. These findings suggest that single copy sales can be encouraged by retaining retail outlets or obtaining new ones, and by continuing to improve the service aspect and appeal of machines and racks. Such steps may become increasingly important because of the growing number of households in which the single head or both adults work, which complicates the delivery of papers to their homes, or reduces their interest in getting it there rather than en route to work or at work.

APPENDIX

TABLES OF BASES FOR QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Table A-1.	All Sampled Adults: Weighted and Unweighted
Table A-2.	All Newspaper Readers, Qualified Yesterday Readers and Yesterday Nonreaders (Unweighted)*
Table A-3.	All Newspaper Readers, Qualified Yesterday Readers and Yesterday Nonreaders (Weighted)*

Note

* Qualified Yesterday Readers read a daily paper "yesterday" and were taken through sampled pages of that paper during the interview. They comprise the base of respondents for data on page openings and readership of specific items of editorial and advertising content.

Yesterday Nonreaders are newspaper readers who did not read a daily paper "yesterday." (Included in this category is a small proportion of readers of a daily yesterday whose paper was not available for use in the interview.) They comprise the base of respondents who were taken through sampled pages of the paper they usually read and asked about their interest in specific items of editorial and advertising content.

Further details on sampling, weighting, and tabulation of questionnaire data are contained in "The Daily Newspaper: Readership and Content" (May 1983), a report on methodology prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc.

Table A-1

Bases for All Sampled Adults

Group	Unweighted Number	Weighted Number (000's)
All Respondents	1,979	163,867
Age:		
18 - 24	269	29,132
25 - 29	223	20,624
30 - 34	227	17,658
35 - 44	351	26,769
45 - 54	273	22,128
55 - 64	277	20,250
65 +	345	26,388
Education:		
Not HS Graduate	456	37,019
HS Graduate	765	63,229
Some College	408	35,640
College Graduate +	334	26,638
Income:		
Under $10,000	295	27,833
$10,000-$14,999	232	20,062
$15,000-$24,999	415	33,705
$25,000-$34,999	359	28,954
$35,000 +	300	23,180
Employment Status:		
Total Employed	1,032	86,414
Full Time	824	69,897
Part Time	208	16,517
Total Not Employed	940	76,795
Homemakers	374	28,896
Sex:		
Male	932	77,718
Female	1,047	86,149
Race:		
White	1,749	142,574
Black	180	16,935
Region:		
Northeast	461	35,946
North Central	547	41,929
South	608	54,247
West	363	31,745

Table A-1 (Continued)

Group	Unweighted Number	Weighted Number (000's)
Residence Size:		
Metro - 1 MM +	797	66,028
250 - 99,999 M	401	32,495
50 - 249,999 M	275	21,962
Non-metro area	506	43,382
Within Metro Area:		
Central City	579	50,307
Suburb	894	70,178
Cable Households:		
Have Cable TV	713	58,613
Any Children:		
Yes	878	70,833
No	1,101	93,034
Reading Frequency:		
Frequent Reader (4-5 days)	1,275	101,576
Infrequent Reader	528	45,549
Home Delivery:		
Delivery of Any Daily	1,203	92,786
AM Delivery	565	44,699
PM Delivery	619	46,850
No Daily Delivered	776	71,084
Marital Status:		
Married	1,392	101,900
Divorced/widowed/separated	298	29,426
Single (never married)	284	31,993
Years at Location:		
5 or more	1,597	128,407
4 or less	377	35,043

Table A-2

Bases for All Newspaper Readers - Unweighted

Group	Total Readers	Qualified Readers	Yesterday Non-readers
All Respondents	1,803	1,288	515
Age:			
18 - 24	238	132	106
25 - 29	196	115	81
30 - 34	208	140	68
35 - 44	331	222	109
45 - 54	249	197	52
55 - 64	258	209	49
65 +	310	260	50
Education:			
Not HS Graduate	375	267	108
HS Graduate	707	485	222
Some College	383	259	124
College Graduate +	323	262	61
Income:			
Under $10,000	245	158	87
$10,000-$14,999	211	150	61
$15,000-$24,999	375	256	119
$25,000-$34,999	340	257	83
$35,000 +	291	221	70
Employment Status:			
Total Employed	943	647	296
Full Time	750	517	233
Part Time	193	130	63
Total Not Employed	853	634	219
Homemakers	342	229	113
Sex:			
Male	837	629	208
Female	966	659	307
Race:			
White	1,615	1,172	443
Black	151	99	52
Region:			
Northeast	435	341	94
North Central	506	333	173
South	550	401	149
West	312	213	99

Table A-2 (Continued)

Group	Total Readers	Qualified Readers	Yesterday Non-readers
Residence Size:			
Metro - 1 MM +	702	503	199
250 - 99,999 M	374	277	97
50 - 249,999 M	262	185	77
Non-metro area	465	323	142
Within Metro Area:			
Central City	536	381	155
Suburb	802	584	218
Cable Households:			
Have Cable TV	667	472	195
Any Children:			
Yes	802	524	278
No	1,001	764	237
Reading Frequency:			
Frequent Reader (4-5 days)	1,275	1,151	124
Infrequent Reader	528	137	391
Home Delivery:			
Delivery of Any Daily	1,203	989	214
AM Delivery	565	469	96
PM Delivery	619	507	112
No Daily Delivered	600	299	301
Marital Status:			
Married	1,293	942	351
Divorced/widowed/separated	253	184	69
Single (never married)	252	157	95
Years at Location:			
5 or more	1,468	1,089	379
4 or less	331	196	135

Table A-3

Bases for All Newspaper Readers - Weighted (in 000's)

Group	Total Readers	Qualified Readers	Yesterday Non-readers
All Respondents	147,125	104,371	42,754
Age:			
18 - 24	25,261	14,886	10,375
25 - 29	18,096	10,825	7,271
30 - 34	15,951	11,143	4,808
35 - 44	24,881	16,510	8,371
45 - 54	19,766	15,792	3,974
55 - 64	18,833	14,904	3,929
65 +	23,471	19,445	4,026
Education:			
Not HS Graduate	30,017	20,750	9,267
HS Graduate	57,373	29,849	17,524
Some College	33,105	22,212	10,893
College Graduate +	25,341	20,271	5,070
Income:			
Under $10,000	22,940	13,838	9,102
$10,000-$14,999	17,723	12,469	5,254
$15,000-$24,999	30,422	20,921	9,501
$25 000-$34,999	27,315	20,676	6,639
$35,000 +	22,402	17,070	5,332
Employment Status:			
Total Employed	77,603	53,109	24,494
Full Time	62,543	43,221	19,322
Part Time	15,060	9,888	5,172
Total Not Employed	68,864	50,604	18,260
Homemakers	25,975	17,244	8,731
Sex:			
Male	68,531	50,586	17,945
Female	78,594	53,785	24,809
Race:			
White	130,161	93,287	36,874
Black	13,675	9,408	4,267
Region:			
Northeast	33,801	27,079	6,722
North Central	38,567	25,031	13,536
South	48,061	34,732	13,329
West	26,696	17,529	9,167

Table A-3 (Continued)

Group	Total Readers	Qualified Readers	Yesterday Non-readers
Residence Size:			
Metro - 1 MM +	56,809	40,960	15,849
250 - 99,999 M	30,212	22,487	7,725
50 - 249,999 M	20,531	13,949	6,582
Non-metro area	39,573	26,975	12,598
Within Metro Area:			
Central City	45,580	31,864	13,716
Suburb	61,972	45,532	16,440
Cable Households:			
Have Cable TV	54,014	38,152	15,862
Any Children:			
Yes	63,546	42,009	21,537
No	83,579	62,362	21,217
Reading Frequency:			
Frequent Reader (4-5 days)	101,576	91,996	9,580
Infrequent Reader	45,549	12,375	33,174
Home Delivery:			
Delivery of Any Daily	92,786	77,041	15,745
AM Delivery	44,699	36,989	7,710
PM Delivery	46,850	39,243	7,607
No Daily Delivered	54,339	27,330	27,009
Marital Status:			
Married	93,296	67,696	25,600
Divorced/widowed/separated	25,486	18,071	7,415
Single (never married)	27,795	18,056	9,739
Years at Location:			
5 or more	116,353	86,679	29,674
4 or less	30,407	17,509	12,898

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The following tables are provided for readers interested in obtaining a quick estimate of the stability of a given percentage or of the significance of the difference between two percentages.

Confidence Intervals for a Given Percentage
(at the 95% confidence level)

	Reported Percentage				
(Base for %)	10 or 90%	20 or 80%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2
200	4.2	5.5	6.3	6.8	6.9
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9
25	11.8	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.6

Example: If a report shows that 20% of all sampled respondents (when N = 500) answer in a particular way the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the true value lies within ± 3.5% of that value, that is, that the range 16.5% - 23.5% contains the true value in the population.

Significance of Differences Between Percentages
(95% confidence level)

	Average of Reported Percentages				
Average of the Bases of Percentages Being Compared	10 or 90%	20 or 80%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	3.7	4.9	5.7	6.1	6.2
250	5.2	7.1	8.1	8.6	8.8
200	5.9	7.8	8.9	9.6	9.8
150	6.8	9.1	10.3	11.0	11.3
100	8.3	11.0	12.7	13.6	13.9
50	11.7	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.7
25	16.7	22.2	25.5	27.2	27.7

Example: A report shows that 33% of all respondents 30 to 39 years of age use a certain product and that only 27% of all respondents in the 40 to 49 age group use that product. Could this difference be due to chance?

> In this example assume a base of 500 for both age groups. The average of the percentages (33% + 27%) equals 30% and the difference between the percentages is 6%. Since 6% is greater than 5.7% (the figure in the table for this base and percentage) the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the product is used significantly more by the 30-39 age group.

These table values are based on an assumption of simple random sampling. The figures may be too large if a stratified sampling technique was used and probably are too small if a cluster sampling technique was utilized. (For formulas used, see Q. McNemar, Psychological Statistics, pages 54, 60.) The second table should be used with extreme caution if the bases being averaged are very different in size.

Research Report

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. 485 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017

NEWSPAPER INVENTORY:

SUMMARY TABLES AND FINDINGS
(WEEKDAY EDITIONS)--1983

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

November 1983

INTRODUCTION

The findings presented here are based on the Newspaper Advertising Bureau's 1983 Newspaper Inventory survey, sponsored by the Newspaper Readership Project. This mail survey of every daily and Sunday/weekend newspaper in the United States and Canada is an expanded update of earlier inventories conducted in 1967, 1974 and 1979.

The main purpose of the earlier surveys was to identify individual newspapers carrying specific standing features or columns for the use of advertisers and agencies who wish to position advertising near particular kinds of feature content. However, later surveys were expanded to include questions on changes in content, graphics and layout; the presence of Op Ed pages; the proportion of circulation that is home delivered; etc.

Across the four surveys some changes have been made in order to take into account the dynamic character of reader interest and corresponding changes in the newspaper itself. Categories like "personal computers" and "wine" have been added; a few, like "chess," have been dropped. In all, the 1983 inventory includes fifty-six kinds of features or columns.

The findings presented in this report refer only to weekday editions published in the United States. The summary tables shown are based on completed questionnaires from 1,310 daily newspapers representing 77% of all United States dailies and 90% of total circulation. Results have been weighted by circulation size groups, in order to project them to the total number of daily newspapers, as well as to total newspapers in circulation.

The study was directed by Charles Lehman of NAB's Research Department.

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Changing Content of the Dynamic American Newspaper

Findings from the 1983 Newspaper Inventory show that the period of rapid change in content, previously noted in the 1979 Inventory, continues unabated. Since 1979, more than six out of ten newspapers (64%) report substantial changes in content. These changes affect three-fourths (76%) of the weekday copies in circulation, because innovation is most widespread among the largest newspapers with the biggest newsholes (Tables 1a, 1b).

The four most frequently reported changes are: increased business coverage (by 45% of all newspapers), increased sports coverage (by 40%) and increased ratio of state and local to national and international coverage (by 38%).

A shift toward more local and state coverage relative to national and international coverage is roughly four times as common as a shift in the opposite direction. Along the same lines, 21% of the responding newspapers report an increased emphasis on features, as compared with 10% reporting an increased emphasis on hard news.

Zoning for better neighborhood or suburban coverage is reported by 14% of all dailies accounting for 32% of total circulation. Figures obtained in the 1979 survey indicate that most of these newspapers are referring only to additional zoned editions, not to a switch from unzoned to zoned status.

Table 1a

Changes in Editorial Content Since April 1979

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Made substantial changes	64%	76%
Increased business coverage	45	62
Increased sports coverage	40	50
Increased ratio of local, state to national, international coverage	38	38
Added special lifestyle sections	25	33
Increased ratio of features to hard news	21	22
Zoned for neighborhood, suburban coverage	14	32
Increased ratio of hard news to features	10	15
Increased ratio of national, international to local, state coverage	8	9
Other	6	8
Made no changes, not reported	36	24

Question: Since our last survey in April 1979, has your paper made any substantial changes in editorial content? (If "Yes") Please check the areas changed.

---

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 1b

Changes in Editorial Content Since April 1979
(by Circulation)

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Made substantial changes	82%	73%	75%	61%	55%
Increased business coverage	70	63	56	44	31
Increased sports coverage	56	44	46	37	35
Increased ratio of local, state to national, international coverage	35	42	43	39	35
Added special lifestyle sections	38	30	33	24	18
Increased ratio of features to hard news	23	18	25	20	21
Zoned for neighborhood, suburban coverage	43	33	22	5	6
Increased ratio of hard news to features	17	12	15	8	8
Increased ratio of national, international to local, state coverage	11	6	9	7	9
Other	9	7	7	5	5
Made no changes, not reported	18	27	25	39	45
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Since our last survey in April 1979, has your paper made any substantial changes in editorial content? (If "Yes") Please check the areas changed.

Table 2a

Changes in Graphics or Layout Since April 1979

	Total Responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Made substantial changes	71%	79%
Changed column width	43%	47%
Changed page size	38	43
Changed masthead	36	40
Increased use of photographs	35	38
Changed typeface	30	38
Changed number of columns	25	31
Went to modular layout on front page	23	26
More use of color	4	5
Section heads redone or instituted	3	4
Graphics redone	2	3
Other	5	7
Made no changes, not reported	29	21

Question. Since our last survey in April 1979, has your paper made any substantial changes in graphics or layout? (If "Yes") Please check the areas changed.

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 2b

Changes in Graphics or Layout Since April 1979

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Made substantial changes	83%	77%	76%	74%	63%
Changed column width	48%	47%	45%	46%	37%
Changed page size	46	40	44	40	33
Changed masthead	41	44	38	37	32
Increased use of photographs	38	41	36	37	30
Changed typeface	42	38	37	28	23
Changed number of columns	36	24	24	26	23
Went to modular layout on front page	27	30	25	24	18
More use of color	6	5	5	3	2
Section heads redone or instituted	5	5	3	3	3
Graphics redone	4	2	1	1	2
Other	8	10	7	6	2
Made no changes, not reported	17	23	24	26	37
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Since our last survey in April 1979, has your paper made any substantial changes in graphics or layout? (If "Yes") Please check the areas changed.

Standing Features in Today's American Newspaper

The tremendous variety of features in today's newspaper is easily documented: In all, the newspapers responding to this survey were asked about fifty-six categories of content; at least once a week, sixteen of these features appear in the majority of United States dailies, while thirty-three features are carried by 25% or more (Table 3a).

Large-circulation newspapers with bigger newsholes tend to carry the greatest number of standing features. This means that twenty-four features are carried at least once a week in the majority of all copies in circulation, and that forty-two kinds of features are carried in 25% or more of total circulation (Tables 3a, 3b).

The fourteen most widely run features appear in at least 70% of total weekday circulation in the United States: astrology (92%); TV log (92%); spectator sports (91%); business, finance (87%); weather map (87%); recipes (85%); games and puzzles (84%); personal advice (81%); participant sports (79%); health and medical (74%); Op Ed page (74%); TV reviews (73%); movie reviews (72%); and "people" (70%).

Given the large newshole of big circulation newspapers, almost any given feature is more likely to appear in these dailies than in smaller newspapers. Among the few exceptions to this general rule are "farm and ranch" features, which appear in 43% of the smallest dailies (circulation under 10,000) but only 14% of the largest; and "religion," in 62% of the smallest and 21% of the largest (Table 3b).

Table 3a

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying Listed Features or Columns Once a Week or More Often

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Advice on personal finance	38%	62%
Astrology	84	92
Automotive	13	25
Beauty	23	36
Best food buys	50	68
Books	25	28
Bridge	55	78
Business, financial	67	87
Career advice	11	23
Child care	11	16
College	10	8
Computers, personal	7	16
Consumers, "Action Line"	21	37
Diet, nutrition	44	60
Environment, ecology	9	11
Etiquette	12	21
Farm and ranch	34	22
Fashion, men	16	31
Fashion, women	26	46
Fashion, teenage	16	29
Games and puzzles	78	84
Gardening	37	39
Health and medical	63	74
Home building, repair	22	25
Home furnishings, decorating	18	26
Household hints	43	44
Movie reviews	46	72
Movie timetable	48	67
Music, records, tapes	31	44
Op Ed page	54	74
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	44	59
"People"	50	70

Table 3a (continued)

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying
Listed Features or Columns Once a Week or More Often

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Personal advice	71%	81%
Pets	14	15
Photography	6	9
Radio log	16	38
Real estate (other than ads)	16	21
Recipes	74	85
Religion	48	30
Restaurants	28	48
Retirement, Social Security	23	28
School news (grade, high)	52	36
Science, technology	9	21
Security & commodity quotations	48	74
Sewing patterns	44	57
Social news	80	69
Sports (spectator)	88	91
Sports (participant)	78	79
Stamps, coins	6	8
TV reviews	51	73
TV log (over the air)	87	92
TV log (incl. cable)	80	NA
Theatre	41	64
Travel & resort	11	11
Weather map	65	87
Wine	14	36
Youth	24	22

Question: How often do you carry the following editorial features or columns on weekdays?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.
‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 3b

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying Listed Features or Columns Once A Week or More Often

	100,000 & Over	50,000- 99,999	25,000- 49,999	10,000- 24,999	Under 10,000
Advice on personal finance	76%	59%	48%	35%	22%
Astrology	93	96	94	88	71
Automotive	32	22	17	11	6
Beauty	45	30	28	23	13
Best food buys	78	68	61	47	37
Books	31	21	24	27	22
Bridge	88	83	77	59	29
Business, financial	96	88	82	67	48
Career advice	31	19	15	9	4
Child care	20	15	14	9	9
College	5	8	11	13	9
Computers, personal	22	14	9	5	2
Consumers, "Action Line"	47	40	28	16	9
Diet, nutrition	68	62	56	45	27
Environment, ecology	13	15	9	9	6
Etiquette	27	17	16	10	7
Farm and ranch	14	22	28	37	43
Fashion, men	41	30	21	13	6
Fashion, women	59	38	33	24	14
Fashion, teenage	37	28	21	14	7
Games and puzzles	86	85	82	79	72
Gardening	37	44	48	39	30
Health and medical	79	73	76	63	53
Home building, repair	27	22	29	26	14
Home furnishings, decorating	30	18	26	19	11
Household hints	45	38	50	47	39
Movie reviews	86	76	60	43	26
Movie timetable	80	61	52	47	37
Music, records, tapes	49	46	40	31	18
Op Ed page	88	72	51	46	47
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	64	68	53	44	30
"People"	79	75	68	47	32

Table 3b (continued)

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying Listed Features or Columns Once a Week or More Often

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Personal advice	84%	86%	79%	72%	60%
Pets	13	22	17	16	9
Photography	11	7	7	7	4
Radio log	54	28	19	11	6
Real estate (other than ads)	26	15	14	17	14
Recipes	88	92	87	75	61
Religion	21	28	33	52	62
Restaurants	61	48	35	21	16
Retirement, Social Security	33	25	22	23	20
School news (grade, high)	24	37	50	60	59
Science, technology	30	15	11	5	4
Security & commodity quotations	88	72	64	44	30
Sewing patterns	59	66	61	50	23
Social news	63	68	78	82	86
Sports (spectator)	93	89	88	89	85
Sports (participant)	82	73	74	82	75
Stamps, coins	9	9	6	5	4
TV reviews	87	68	61	49	36
TV log (over the air)	95	95	89	85	83
TV log (incl. cable)	86	79	83	84	75
Theatre	77	64	52	36	27
Travel & resort	10	14	13	11	9
Weather map	94	91	89	76	32
Wine	51	34	21	6	2
Youth	20	25	23	28	22
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: How often do you carry the following editorial features or columns on weekdays?

Everyday Features and Columns

Most standing features or columns appear only on particular weekdays, not in every daily edition. However, certain types of features tend to appear every day in the great majority of newspapers carrying them. These are: astrology, bridge, games and puzzles, personal advice, security and commodity quotations, social news, spectator sports, participant sports, TV log and weather map (See Tables 4a, 4b).

In addition, a few features that are very popular among big circulation dailies appear every day in most copies in circulation, even though they are not carried by the majority of newspapers on a daily basis. These include: business and financial features; Op Ed page; "people;" and TV reviews.

Table 4a

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying Listed Features or Columns Every Weekday

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Advice on personal finance	15%	24%
Astrology	83	91
Automotive	2	2
Beauty	7	9
Best food buys	2	2
Books	2	2
Bridge	53	76
Business, financial	40	73
Career advice	2	4
Child care	2	3
College	3	2
Computers, personal	1	1
Consumers, "Action Line"	10	23
Diet, nutrition	6	5
Environment, ecology	2	4
Etiquette	6	6
Farm and ranch	5	4
Fashion, men	2	3
Fashion, women	6	7
Fashion, teenage	3	3
Games and puzzles	75	81
Gardening	3	2
Health and medical	43	41
Home building, repair	1	1
Home furnishings, decorating	2	1
Household hints	27	24
Movie reviews	13	34
Movie timetable	34	55
Music, records, tapes	3	6
Op Ed page	46	68
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	6	9
"People"	42	64

Table 4a (continued)

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying
Listed Features or Columns Every Weekday

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Personal advice	68%	78%
Pets	3	4
Photography	2	1
Radio log	12	34
Real estate (other than ads)	2	3
Recipes	8	6
Religion	4	4
Restaurants	4	4
Retirement, Social Security	4	6
School news (grade, high)	25	17
Science, technology	2	4
Security & commodity quotations	44	69
Sewing patterns	35	45
Social news	69	54
Sports (spectator)	85	89
Sports (participant)	73	71
Stamps, coins	1	1
TV reviews	32	59
TV log	67	84
Theatre	24	46
Travel & resort	1	1
Weather map	64	67
Wine	*	*
Youth	10	8

*Less than 0.5%

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 4b

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying Listed Features or Columns Every Weekday

	100,000 & Over	50,000- 99,999	25,000- 49,999	10,000- 24,999	Under 10,000
Advice on personal finance	28%	23%	22%	13%	7%
Astrology	92	95	94	88	69
Automotive	2	2	2	2	1
Beauty	11	6	7	8	4
Best food buys	2	3	1	2	2
Books	8	2	2	2	1
Bridge	86	81	73	57	26
Business, financial	91	72	61	32	18
Career advice	5	3	2	2	1
Child care	5	1	1	3	1
College	-	2	3	5	3
Computers, personal	2	-	*	*	1
Consumers, "Action Line"	31	22	13	6	4
Diet, nutrition	4	5	7	8	6
Environment, ecology	6	2	3	2	1
Etiquette	6	3	6	9	5
Farm and ranch	3	7	4	5	5
Fashion, men	3	2	2	4	2
Fashion, women	8	5	4	7	7
Fashion, teenage	3	2	2	4	2
Games and puzzles	83	85	78	77	68
Gardening	2	1	4	2	3
Health and medical	37	45	52	47	39
Home building, repair	-	-	2	2	1
Home furnishings, decorating	1	1	3	3	1
Household hints	22	22	30	29	27
Movie reviews	48	29	15	7	4
Movie timetable	68	48	42	33	20
Music, records, tapes	9	2	3	3	1
Op Ed page	85	62	45	40	37
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	11	11	5	8	3
"People"	74	71	58	41	22

Table 4b (continued)

Percentage of Newspapers Carrying
Listed Features or Columns Every Weekday

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Personal advice	81%	81%	76%	70%	58%
Pets	4	9	2	3	2
Photography	-	1	2	2	2
Radio log	51	21	14	7	4
Real estate (other than ads)	4	1	2	3	2
Recipes	6	4	5	6	12
Religion	5	4	3	2	5
Restaurants	5	2	4	5	3
Retirement, Social Security	7	5	5	4	4
School news (grade, high)	12	15	25	25	31
Science, technology	5	3	4	2	1
Security & commodity quotations	84	64	59	40	27
Sewing patterns	45	52	54	43	15
Social news	44	57	68	72	77
Sports (spectator)	91	85	87	88	82
Sports (participant)	72	65	70	78	72
Stamps, coins	1	-	1	-	1
TV reviews	74	60	42	27	14
TV log (over the air)	90	93	83	66	49
TV log (incl. cable)	77	73	69	55	37
Theatre	62	39	26	21	13
Travel & resort	-	-	3	1	1
Weather map	94	91	89	76	31
Wine	-	1	1	-	-
Youth	7	5	7	11	12
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

*Less than 0.5%

Are Standing Features Usually Syndicated or Locally Produced?

The answer to this question depends on which standing feature is under discussion. In addition to locally produced feature content, daily newspapers have a wealth of syndicated material to draw upon, ranging from "Dear Abby" to "Ziggy."[1] The extent to which local and syndicated material is used runs the gamut from 98% syndicated (for "Astrology") to 97% local (for "School news") (Table 5).

Features like "Bridge" or "Health and Medical, "to which little would be added by incorporating local material, depend heavily on syndicated sources. Areas in which both national and local perspectives are beneficial, such as Op Ed pages and Spectator Sports, tend to use a combination of syndicated material and staff-written content.

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[1] The question on the use of syndicated versus local sources was not asked about comic strips.

Table 5

Source of Most Widely Carried Standing Features†

	Syndicated	Locally Produced	Both
Astrology	98%	2%	-
Bridge	96	2	2%
Personal advice	92	6	2
Games and puzzles	90	6	4
Health and medical	82	6	12
Weather map	77	16	7
TV log	76	22	2
TV reviews	67	18	5
"People"	49	35	16
Best food buys	29	48	23
Business, finance	24	41	35
Recipes	21	46	33
Op Ed	11	35	54
Sports (spectator)	3	49	48
Sports (participant)	2	61	37
Social news	2	91	7
School news	-	97	3

†Features carried at least once a week by 50% or more of all daily newspapers reporting. Each row is based on all newspapers carrying that feature, with "no answers" eliminated. (Basic data are weighted by distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers across five circulation size groups.)

The (Almost) Ubiquitous Comic Strip

Ninety-seven percent of all responding newspapers report that they carry comic strips, and this proportion shows little variation among circulation size groups. As might be expected, the number of strips carried tends to increase with circulation size, but 50% of all dailies carry ten to nineteen individual comic strips.

Table 6

Number of Comic Features in Weekday Editions

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Any comic strips (total)	97%	97%	98%	97%	98%	95%
Less than 10 strips	37	9	13	15	31	63
10-19 strips	50	44	65	67	65	31
20-29 strips	8	34	19	13	2	1
30 strips or more	2	10	1	2	-	-
No comic strips	2	2	-	1	1	4
Not reported	1	1	2	3	1	1
Base: Newspapers responding=100%		(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: How many comic strips are carried in weekday editions?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

Children's Features

In addition to comic strips, four out of ten daily newspapers (42%) regularly carry features designed especially for children. Children's features tend to use syndicated material exclusively, or a combination of syndicated and local material.

Table 7

Children's Features Other Than Comics Carried Once A Week or More Often

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Carry children's features	42%	47%	53%	51%	47%	32%
Both syndicated and local material	17	17	21	25	17	12
Syndicated material only	19	23	23	24	23	13
Local material only	6	7	8	2	7	7
Do not carry	57	52	45	47	52	66
Not reported	1	1	2	2	1	2
Base: Newspapers responding=100	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Aside from comic strips, do weekday editions regularly carry features intended mainly for children (at least once a week)? (If "Yes") Is the material in these children's features syndicated or derived from local sources (schools or staff members)?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers across five circulation size groups.

Newshole

The typical American newspaper has fifteen pages of news and editorial matter, exclusive of advertising. The economics of publishing make for a close relationship between advertising revenues and the size of the newshole, the average for dailies with circulations of 100,000 or more being two and one half times as large (25 pages) as the newshole of papers with circulations under 10,000 (10 pages).

Table 8

Average Number of Pages of News and Editorial in Weekday Editions

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Number of Pages:						
Under ten	22%	3%	-	1%	13%	47%
Ten to nineteen	40	19	37%	52	56	33
Twenty to twenty-nine	15	37	27	18	13	5
Thirty and over	13	28	21	18	8	8
Not reported	10	13	15	11	10	7
Average number of pages (median)	(15)	(25)	(20)	(19)	(15)	(10)
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Excluding advertising, about how many pages of news and editorial matter do you run on an average weekday?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

American Newspapers Are Getting Fatter

More than half of the responding newspapers (52%) estimate that they are now running more pages of news and editorial matter than they did two years ago. About one third say that they are running fewer pages, and 14% report that there has been no change in the size of their weekday editions. Dailies in the smallest and largest circulation size groups are espceially likely to report that their present weekday editions are fatter.

Table 9

Change in Number of Pages of News and Editorial Over Last Two Years

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
More pages now	52%	59%	44%	41%	48%	58%
Fewer pages now	34	28	39	44	39	27
About the same (volunteered)	14	13	17	15	13	15
Base: Newspapers responding=100%		(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Would you say this is more or fewer pages (of news and editorial matter) than you were running two years ago?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,722 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

Proportion of Newshole in Photographs and Illustrations

Regardless of circulation size, most American newspapers devote about 15% of their total newshole to photographs, other illustrations and charts, exclusive of comic strips. Only 4% of all dailies report that illustrative material represents as much as thirty percent of their total newshole.

Table 10

Proportion of Total Weekday Newshole Devoted to Photographs, Other Illustrations and Charts

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
None	*	-	-	*	1%	*
Less than 10%	13%	10%	8%	12%	12	15%
10% to 19%	57	47	57	60	60	58
20% to 29%	20	24	22	22	18	19
30% & over	4	6	6	2	3	3
Not reported	6	13	7	4	6	5
Median percentage	(15)	(17)	(16)	(16)	(15)	(15)
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

*Less than 0.5%

Question: About what proportion of the total weekday newshole is devoted to photographs, other illustrations or charts (excluding comics)?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

How Many Sections Do Weekday Editions Have?

Weekday editions of a typical daily contain three physically separate sections. On average, newspapers in the largest circulation size group have two and one half times as many sections as the smallest dailies have (five versus two sections). As a result, the average weekday edition in circulation has four sections (Tables 11a, 11b). The range within individual circulation size groups is greater than these average figures might suggest.

Table 11a

Number of Physically Separate Sections in Weekday Editions

	Total Responses Weighted By: Newspapers†	Total Responses Weighted By: Circulation‡
One	23%	12%
Two	26	20
Three	11	12
Four	20	30
Five	3	4
Six	4	8
Seven or More	3	6
Not reported	10	8
Average number (mean)	(3)	(4)

Question: On the average, how many physically separate sections does a weekday edition of the newspaper have? (Please include any separate classified sections but exclude advertising inserts or preprints.)

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 11b

Number of Physically Separate Sections in Weekday Editions

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
One	4%	4%	3%	12%	48%
Two	4	9	25	41	24
Three	9	18	16	16	5
Four	43	43	40	17	3
Five	5	5	4	2	2
Six	18	5	3	2	2
Seven or more	12	7	2	1	2
Not reported	5	9	7	9	14
Average number (mean)	(5)	(4)	(4)	(3)	(2)
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: On the average, how many physically separate sections does a weekday edition of the newspaper have? (Please include any separate classified sections but exclude advertising inserts or preprints.)

The Continuing Sectional Revolution

The term "section," as it applies to newspapers, can be ambiguous, referring either to a physically separate part, the grouping of related content on adjacent pages, or to both form and content simultaneously. Thus, a single (physically separate) section may contain two or more "sections" (as defined by content). The 1979 Inventory asked only about "physically separate" sections, whereas the 1983 survey also includes a reference to "labeled or otherwise identifiable" sections.

As might be expected, this revision in the questionnaire produced an increase in the number of newspapers reporting the presence of a given type of section. For example, the percentage reporting a business or finance section at least once a week rose from 15% of all newspapers in 1979, to 43% in 1983, representing 62% of all copies in circulation (Tables 12a, 12b).

As in the case of standing features, almost all kinds of sections are more likely to appear in big circulation dailies than in smaller newspapers. One notable exception is the TV and radio section. This kind of section tends to appear in the Sunday edition of large newspapers, whereas smaller newspapers that don't have a Sunday or weekend edition may carry it in a weekday edition.

Table 12a

Sections Carried Once A Week or More Often

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Main News	71%	88%
Second or Local News	45	66
Sports	74	90
Food (separate)	53	74
Home (separate)	13	17
Food & Home (combined)	9	9
Entertainment	54	65
Business, Finance	43	62
Lifestyle, Women	52	67
TV, Radio	49	43
Fashion	13	27
Farm	7	4
Travel	5	7
Science	4	10
Money, Consumer	1	1

Question: Which of the following regularly appear as physically separate, labeled or otherwise identifiable sections in weekday editions (that is, at least once a week)?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 12b

Sections Carried Once A Week or More Often

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Main News	95%	87%	85%	74%	53%
Second or Local News	77	66	59	44	29
Sports	96	91	91	76	56
Food (separate)	85	69	70	59	31
Home (separate)	20	8	18	17	7
Food & Home (combined)	9	13	5	12	8
Entertainment	68	70	68	57	39
Business, Finance	72	58	58	44	26
Lifestyle, Women	72	71	67	52	36
TV, Radio	38	45	49	53	51
Fashion	38	18	17	10	6
Farm	3	3	6	7	8
Travel	9	6	7	5	3
Science	13	9	5	3	1
Money, Consumer	2	1	1	1	-
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Which of the following regularly appear as physically separate, labeled or otherwise identifiable sections in weekday editions (that is, at least once a week)?

Table 13 shows that among newspapers carrying several pages or a section on a given topic, there is a tendency to include that kind of material in every weekday edition. However, most food sections are published only on Wednesday, and Friday is a popular day for both entertainment and TV, radio sections.

Table 13

Weekdays on Which Editorial Sections Appear†
(Total U.S. Daily Newspapers)

	Every day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main News	70%	*	*	*	*	*
Second or Local News	41	5%	*	4%	2%	1%
Sports	70	1	1%	3	2	1
Food (separate)	3	3	6	37	6	*
Home (separate)	2	*	1	2	4	3
Food & Home (combined)	3	*	1	5	1	1
Entertainment	28	*	1	1	7	19
Business, Finance	25	4	5	7	6	4
Lifestyle, Women	39	3	3	7	5	4
TV, Radio	30	*	1	1	2	17
Fashion	4	1	3	3	3	1
Farm	1	1	2	1	1	1
Travel	1	*	1	*	1	2
Science	1	1	1	1	1	1

*Less than 0.5%

†Apparent discrepancies between Tables 10a and 11 reflect percentage rounding and duplicate listings for newspapers having a given section on two or more weekdays. Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

Editorial Use of Color

Since the 1979 Inventory, the percentage of newspapers making any use of color has shown comparatively little change. Nevertheless, an impressive number have shifted from spot color to full color, particularly among the largest dailies. More than half (53%) of the weekday copies in circulation now make some editorial use of full color (Tables 14a, 14b). In the largest circulation size group the percent reporting editorial use of full color has doubled since 1979, going from 33% to 66%.

Table 14a

Editorial Use of Color in Weekday Editions†

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers‡	Circulation†‡
Full color (Total)	28%	53%
Front page only	5	5
Other pages	23	48
Spot color (Total)	50%	33%
Front page only	33	16
Other pages	17	17
Color not used editorially	17	10
Not reported	5	4

Question: To what extent if ROP color used editorially in weekday editions?

†Multiple answers have been edited to limit column totals to 100%. (If a newspaper reports using both full and spot color, the spot color reference has been eliminated.)

‡Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

†‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 14b

Editorial Use of Color in Weekday Editions†

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Full Color (Total)	66%	53%	48%	23%	9%
Front page only	5	3	10	4	4
Other pages	61	50	38	19	5
Spot color (Total)	21%	40%	42%	58%	57%
Front page only	8	14	22	37	45
Other pages	13	26	20	21	12
Color not used editorially	8	6	7	15	28
Not reported	5	1	3	4	6
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: To what extent is ROP color used editorially in weekday editions?

†Multiple answers have been edited to limit column totals to 100% (e.g., if a newspaper reports using both full color and spot color, the spot color reference has been eliminated).

Zoning

Zoning, reported by 27% of all daily newspapers representing 53% of total circulation, is far more widespread among the largest dailies (Table 15). Just over two thirds (67%) of the newspapers with circulation of 100,000 or more have zoned editions, as do 57% of those with circulations between 50,000 and 100,000. Among these larger dailies, zoning usually applies to both editorial content and advertising.

Table 15

Zoning of Weekday Editions

	Total Responses Weighted By: Newspapers	Circulation
Zoning for advertising and editorial	18%	44%
Zoning for advertising only	9	9
No zoning	66	43
Not reported	7	4

(by Circulation Size Groups)

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Advertising and editorial	57%	52%	26%	6%	5%
Advertising only	10	5	8	12	9
No zoning	31	35	59	75	78
Not reported	2	8	7	7	8
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: To what extent are weekday editions zoned?

Positioning of Advertising

Eighty-three percent of all United States dailies position advertising near appropriate editorial on request. The great majority (58% of all newspapers) make no charge for positioning, unless the advertiser insists on a guaranteed position.

Table 16

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Position on request	83%	78%	77%	79%	80%	88%
No extra charge‡	58	53	52	54	54	65
Extra charge	21	21	20	21	23	20
Not reported	4	4	5	4	3	3
Would not position, and not reported	17%	22%	23%	21%	20%	12%
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: If an advertiser requests it, would you position advertising near appropriate editorial features, such as those listed? Would there be an extra charge for this?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.
‡Some charge for guaranteed position.

Corporate Advertising on Op Ed Page

Seven out of ten dailies with an Op Ed page (70%) accept corporate advertising on the page: 43% put no qualifications on the kinds of corporate messages positioned, while 27% state that placement on the Op Ed page would depend on the ad.

Table 17

Positioning Policy for Corporate Advertising on Op Ed Page

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Would position	43%	50%	39%	45%	37%	49%
Depends on ad	27	37	25	25	20	34
Would not position	30	13	36	30	43	17
Base: Newspapers with Op Ed Page=100%	-	(82)	(88)	(130)	(172)	(125)

Question: If an advertiser requests it, would you position a corporate institutional ad on your Op Ed page?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

Wednesday: The Most Popular Day for Food Advertising

Regardless of circulation size, about two out of three daily newspapers report that they carry their heaviest volume of food advertising on Wednesday. As shown earlier (Table 13), this is also the day on which food sections are most likely to appear.

Table 18

Heaviest Weekday for Food Advertising

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Monday	12%	2%	4%	6%	15%	16%
Tuesday	13	4	5	15	15	16
Wednesday	68	70	66	72	66	67
Thursday	9	24	24	9	7	4
Friday	*	-	2	-	*	*
Not reported	2	-	2	2	2	2
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

*Less than 0.5

Question: On which weekday do you carry your heaviest volume of food advertising?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups. Total exceeds 100% because of multiple mentions.

Heaviest Weekdays for General Merchandise Advertising

When asked about the weekday that accounts for the heaviest volume of general merchandise advertising, daily newspapers split their responses almost equally between Wednesday (45%) and Thrusday (43%). Wednesday has more of an edge among newspapers in the smallest circulation size group, while Thursday tends to account for more general merchandise advertising in larger newspapers.

Table 19

Heaviest Weekday for General Merchandise Advertising

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Monday	3%	2%	1%	1%	4%	4%
Tuesday	5	2	2	3	5	8
Wednesday	45	33	25	34	47	54
Thursday	43	56	50	56	47	31
Friday	7	12	9	6	5	7
Not reported	5	5	15	6	4	3
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: On which weekday do you carry the heaviest volume of general merchandise advertising for department stores or other general merchandise advertisers?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups. Total exceeds 100% because of multiple mentions.

Home Delivery

Responding newspapers estimate that 84% (median) of their circulation is home delivered. Since this figure tends to be slightly lower for the two largest circulation size groups, this means that an estimated 82% of all weekday copies sold are home delivered (Tables 20a, 20b). An apparent inconsistency between this figures and other research[1] showing that 71% of all weekday readers obtain the copies they read through home delivery, reflects the fact that circulation figures cannot allow for "pass-along" readership.

Table 20a

Percentage of Weekday Circulation Home Delivered

	Total Responses Weighted By:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Under 60%	9%	10%
60% to 69%	8	8
70% to 79%	15	19
80% to 89%	28	31
90% and over	31	24
Not reported	9	8
Median percentage	(84%)	(82%)

Question: Approximately what percentage of your current weekday circulation is home delivered?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.
‡Weighting based on distribution of 62,487,177 circulation among five circulation size groups.

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[1] Audits and Surveys, Inc., 1982.

Table 20b

Percentage of Weekday Circulation Home Delivered

	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Under 60%	10%	13%	3%	6%	13%
60% to 69%	10	6	4	5	11
70% to 79%	21	22	13	13	14
80% to 89%	34	31	30	29	25
90% and over	19	18	41	38	28
Not reported	6	10	9	9	9
Median percentage	(81%)	(81%)	(88%)	(87%)	(83%)
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Approximately what percentage of your current weekday circulation is home delivered?

Newspaper in Education Program

Half of all newspapers in the nation (54%) report that their weekday editions are used in an NIE program--one that involves actual distribution of the newspaper to the schools. Participation in NIE programs is clearly related to newspaper size, ranging from 37% of the newspapers in the smallest circulation size group to 85% of those with circulations of 100,000 and over.

Table 21

Use of Daily Newspaper in NIE Program

	Weighted Total†	100,000 & Over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Used in NIE program	54%	85%	75%	67%	50%	37%
Not used in NIE program	44	13	24	30	46	62
Not reported	2	2	1	3	4	1
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	-	(128)	(130)	(246)	(391)	(415)

Question: Is your daily newspaper used in a Newspaper in Education program--one that involves actual distribution of newspapers to the schools?

†Weighting based on distribution of 1,711 daily newspapers among five circulation size groups.

Research Report

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc.

NEWSPAPER INVENTORY:

SUMMARY TABLES AND FINDINGS
(Sunday/weekend Editions)--1983

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

December 1983

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the Newspaper Advertising Bureau's 1983 Newspaper Inventory, sponsored by the Newspaper Readership Project. This mail survey of every daily and Sunday/weekend newspaper in the United States and Canada is an expanded update of earlier surveys conducted in 1967, 1974 and 1979.[1]

The inventory is used to prepare a computerized list of newspapers carrying specific standing features for advertisers and agencies who wish to position advertising near particular kinds of feature content. The 1983 survey of Sunday editions includes data on fifty-six kinds of standing features, as well as comics, magazine supplements and fourteen types of sections. It also contains information on home delivery, zoning and other related subjects.

Summary tables in the report refer only to Sunday/weekend editions published in the United States and are based on completed questionnaires from 572 newspapers, representing 74% of Sunday/weekend editions published. Total lines have been weighted to reflect national distribution, based on the following relationships:

		Total U.S. Sunday/Weekend:	
Circulation Group:	Sample	Newspapers	Circulation
100,000 & over	21%	15%	65%
50,000-99,999	15	14	15
25,000-49,999	23	20	10
10,000-24,999	25	28	7
Under 10,000	16	23	3
Base: Newspapers responding=100	(572)	(768)	(56,260,764)

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[1] The 1967 and 1974 surveys covered weekday editions only.

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Sections in Sunday and Weekend Newspapers

Sectionalization is a basic fact of life among Sunday and weekend editions. The average number of physically separate sections ranges from three, in the smallest circulation size group, to ten in the largest. Overall, the average Sunday/weekend edition published in the United States has six physically separate sections (Tables 1a, 1b).

Because sections can be defined by content as well as form, newspapers responding to the survey were asked about fourteen types of "physically separate, labeled or otherwise identifiable" sections. As Table 2a shows, seven of these are carried by more than half of all Sunday/weekend editions responding to the survey: main news (85%); second or local news (51%); comics (84%); sports (82%); TV section or magazine (72%); lifestyle or women (72%); and business, finance (51%).

Large-circulation newspapers with large newsholes can usually devote more space to a wider variety of content than small-circulation newspapers can. More than eight out of ten Sunday editions with circulations of 100,000 and over (84%) have an entertainment section, as compared with only 28% of those having circulations under 10,000 (Table 2b). Travel sections are found in 66% of the newspapers in the largest circulation size group, but in only 1% of those in the smallest circulation size group.

Table 1a

Number of Physically Separate Sections in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
One	5%	1%
Two	9	1
Three	11	2
Four	16	7
Five	12	5
Six-seven	21	23
Eight-nine	11	23
Ten-eleven	5	13
Twelve-thirteen	3	9
Fourteen & over	3	13
Not reported	4	3
	100%	100%
Average (mean) number of sections	six	nine

Question: On the average, how many physically separate sections does a Sunday or weekend edition of this newspaper have?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 1b

Number of Physically Separate Sections in Sunday/weekend Editions (by Circulation Size Group)

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
One	1%	1%	1%	1%	16%
Two	-	-	1	7	30
Three	-	1	2	14	27
Four	3	7	20	29	17
Five	2	5	18	20	6
Six-seven	17	42	38	21	-
Eight-nine	26	28	13	2	-
Ten-eleven	17	8	4	1	-
Twelve-thirteen	13	3	-	1	-
Fourteen & over	18	-	-	1	-
Not reported	3	5	3	3	4
Average (mean) number of sections	ten	seven	six	five	three
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: On the average, how many physically separate sections does a Sunday or weekend edition of this newspaper have?

Table 2a

Sections Appearing Every Week in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Main news	85%	92%
Second or local news	51	73
Comics	84	95
Sports	82	94
TV section or magazine	72	82
Lifestyle, women	72	82
Business, finance	51	70
Editorial or news analysis	49	65
Entertainment	48	72
Food (separate)	12	12
Home (separate)	19	35
Food & home (combined)	6	5
Travel	21	51
Fashion	10	14

Question: Which of the following regularly appear as physically separate, labeled or otherwise identifiable sections in Sunday editions?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.
‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 2b

Sections Appearing Every Week in Sunday/weekend Editions

	100,000 & over	50,000- 99,999	25,000- 49,999	10,000- 24,999	Under 10,000
Main news	93%	95%	95%	88%	62%
Second or local news	79	81	61	42	17
Comics	97	95	98	86	56
Sports	95	98	99	88	43
TV section or magazine	86	79	70	71	61
Lifestyle, women	84	83	82	78	42
Business, finance	76	70	58	48	22
Editorial or news analysis	72	57	48	53	27
Entertainment	84	62	43	41	28
Food (separate)	14	5	10	18	10
Home (separate)	42	29	14	14	6
Food & home (combined)	5	3	5	8	7
Travel	66	34	20	7	1
Fashion	16	8	11	10	4
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Which of the following regularly appear as physically separate, labeled or otherwise identifiable sections in Sunday editions?

Magazine Supplements and Comic Sections

About two thirds (66%) of all Sunday/weekend editions published in the United States carry one or more magazine supplements. Staff-written supplements[1] are found in 15% of all Sunday/weekend editions, or about one third (32%) of all Sunday/weekend copies in circulation (Table 3).

Four percent of all Sunday/weekend newspapers carry two magazine supplements, usually a syndicated supplement plus a staff-written magazine. Among Sunday newspapers with circulations of 100,000 or more, 12% have two supplements.[2]

More than nine out of ten Sunday/weekend editions include a comic section: 93% of all those published in the United States or 96% of all Sunday/weekend copies in circulation (Table 4). A typical Sunday/weekend comic section contains eleven to nineteen individual features, but 60% of the newspapers in the largest circulation size group carry twenty features or more.

In addition to comic sections, about one fourth(23%) of all Sunday/weekend editions have other special pages or sections for children (Table 5), presenting syndicated or locally-written content.

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[1] In Table 3, staff-written supplements are those identified as "Sunday" and "Other."

[2] These figures are not shown in Table 3, but may be derived by subtracting the net figure shown from the sum of the figures for Family Weekly, Parade, Sunday and "other."

Table 3

Magazine Supplements in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Total Responses Weighted by: Circulation‡
Any magazine supplement (net)	66%	86%
Family Weekly	40	22
Parade	15	41
Sunday	2	8
Other	13	24
No magazine supplement	28	10
Not reported	6	4

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Any magazine supplement (net)	89%	92%	89%	65%	19%
Family Weekly	4	48	79	54	8
Parade	52	42	5	1	-
Sunday	12	1	-	1	1
Other	33	5	9	11	11
No magazine supplement	7	7	8	30	69
Not reported	4	1	3	5	12
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Which of the following magazine supplements does the Sunday or weekend edition carry?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 4

Number of Individual Comic Features in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Total Responses Weighted by: Circulation‡
Comic section (total)	93%	96%
10 features or less	15	4
11 to 19 features	50	41
20 to 29 features	24	43
30 features or more	4	8
No comic section	5	2
Not reported	2	2

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Comic section (total)	97%	97%	95%	92%	88%
10 features or less	1	5	7	13	38
11 to 19 features	36	44	58	61	45
20 to 29 features	50	41	28	16	4
30 features or more	10	7	2	2	1
No comic section	2	-	2	5	11
Not reported	1	3	3	3	1
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 5

Special Pages or Sections for Children in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Carry special pages or sections for children	23%	25%
Both syndicated and local material	7	9
Syndicated material only	12	12
Local material only	4	4
No special pages or sections for children	77	75

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Carry special pages or sections for children	21%	36%	23%	24%	15%
Both syndicated and local material	8	10	8	8	2
Syndicated material only	10	19	13	12	7
Local material only	3	7	2	4	6
No special pages or sections for children	79	64	77	76	85
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Other than comics, does the Sunday or weekend edition include a special page or section for children? Is the material in these children's features syndicated or derived from local sources?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Editorial Content of Sunday/weekend Newspapers

Although the mix of features varies from one publication to another, American newspapers offer their weekend readers great variety of content. Of 56 features asked about, nine are carried every week in at least seven out of ten Sunday/weekend editions. These are: comics (93%); spectator sports (92%); TV log (89%); astrology (89%); games and puzzles (85%); participant sports (81%); weather map (75%); business, finance (73%) and personal advice (71%) (Table 6a).

With the exception of a very few topics like "farm and ranch" or "school news," most kinds of standing features are carried by a larger percentage of big-circulation than small-circulation newspapers (Table 6b). This is why the figures for Sunday/weekend copies in circulation look very different from the figures based on newspapers (Table 6a).

In all, eighteen of the listed standing features or columns are carried in at least seven out of ten copies in circulation: comics (96%); TV log (96%); spectator sports (93%); weather map (93%); astrology (92%); business, finance (90%); games and puzzles (89%); op ed page (87%); books (81%); travel and resort (81%); personal advice (80%); social news (79%); "people" (77%); participant sports (76%), TV reviews (765); bridge (75%); security and commodity quotations (74%); and theatre (73%).

Table 6a

Percentage of Sunday/weekend Editions Carrying Listed Standing Features or Columns Every Week

	Total Responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Advice on personal finance	39%	54%
Astrology	89	92
Automotive	9	24
Beauty	17	25
Best food buys	14	11
Books	50	81
Bridge	56	75
Business, financial	73	90
Career advice	10	26
Child care	6	11
College	10	9
Computers, personal	4	10
Consumers, "Action Line"	22	35
Diet, nutrition	19	29
Environment, ecology	6	9
Etiquette	11	22
Farm and ranch	22	14
Fashion, men	9	16
Fashion, women	19	30
Fashion, teenage	8	10
Games and puzzles	85	89
Gardening	33	55
Health and medical	50	61
Home building, repair	26	46
Home furnishings, decorating	19	37
Household hints	37	47
Movie reviews	44	69
Movie timetable	52	68
Music, record, tapes	34	61
Op Ed page	68	87
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	45	68
"People"	59	77

Table 6a (continued)

Percentage of Sunday/weekend Editions Carrying Listed Standing Features or Columns Every Week

	Total Responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Personal advice	71%	80%
Pets	19	34
Photography	11	26
Radio log	19	48
Real estate (other than ads)	31	57
Recipes	33	40
Religion	38	40
Restaurants	20	38
Retirement, Social Security	19	29
School news (grade, high)	40	25
Science, technology	9	20
Security & commodity quotations	46	74
Sewing patterns	42	51
Social news	84	79
Sports (spectator)	92	93
Sports (participant)	81	76
Stamps, coins	18	43
TV reviews	55	76
TV log (over the air)	89	96
TV log (incl. cable/pay)	83	88
Theatre	48	73
Travel & resort	41	81
Weather map	75	93
Wine	8	23
Youth	23	29

Question: How often does your Sunday or weekend edition carry the following standing features or columns?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 6b

Percentage of Sunday/weekend Editions Carrying Listed Standing Features or Columns Every Week

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Advice on personal finance	58%	50%	52%	31%	18%
Astrology	92	88	97	94	73
Automotive	32	13	8	3	1
Beauty	29	19	15	16	11
Best food buys	10	9	14	16	16
Books	92	77	55	36	18
Bridge	83	63	68	54	28
Business, financial	94	90	85	69	43
Career advice	35	15	8	2	1
Child care	13	9	5	4	3
College	8	10	11	12	8
Computers, personal	14	6	4	1	-
Consumers, "Action Line"	39	36	23	14	10
Diet, nutrition	35	15	22	18	11
Environment, ecology	9	10	5	5	3
Etiquette	27	16	10	5	3
Farm and ranch	9	23	30	22	21
Fashion, men	20	9	8	6	6
Fashion, women	36	21	23	12	10
Fashion, teenage	10	10	8	7	8
Games and puzzles	91	90	89	84	76
Gardening	64	51	33	23	15
Health and medical	66	56	48	51	37
Home building, repair	52	52	27	18	4
Home furnishings, decorating	46	29	20	10	4
Household hints	53	36	44	33	27
Movie reviews	79	63	51	35	17
Movie timetable	77	59	45	48	43
Music, records, tapes	74	49	38	21	13
Op Ed page	92	88	76	56	46
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	77	62	55	38	13
"People"	82	78	59	53	29

Table 6b (continued)

Percentage of Sunday/weekend Editions Carrying Listed Standing Features or Columns Every Week

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Personal advice	83%	76%	82%	63%	63%
Pets	41	26	20	12	7
Photography	33	19	9	6	-
Radio log	62	34	14	6	3
Real estate (other than ads)	69	43	31	20	10
Recipes	44	34	35	24	35
Religion	42	36	42	34	39
Restaurants	49	19	20	15	7
Retirement, Social Security	34	20	21	17	8
School news (grade, high)	18	30	42	53	44
Science, technology	25	15	8	3	2
Security & commodity quotations	86	65	56	35	15
Sewing patterns	51	60	55	39	18
Social news	77	80	89	84	88
Sports (spectator)	92	94	95	90	91
Sports (participant)	74	81	82	81	83
Stamps, coins	55	26	20	6	1
TV reviews	84	73	58	46	33
TV log (over the air)	98	97	89	84	87
TV log (incl. cable/pay)	90	83	88	81	76
Theatre	85	60	52	37	27
Travel & resort	95	79	54	17	3
Weather map	96	95	96	76	28
Wine	31	12	7	1	1
Youth	31	24	23	24	16
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: How often does your Sunday or weekend edition carry the following standing features or columns?

How Do Standing Features in Sunday and Weekday Editions Compare?

In order to compare the standing features in weekday and Sunday/weekend editions, a special analysis was made for newspapers with circulations of 100,000 or more.[1] This comparison shows that Sunday/weekend editions carry more standing features on an every-issue basis than weekday editions do (Table 7). In a few cases, the difference is so extreme that it would be fairly accurate to describe certain kinds of content as "Sunday" newspaper features. For example, 95% of these big-circulation newspapers report that every Sunday/weekend edition carries a "travel and resort" feature, but none report that such a feature appears in every weekday edition.

In the case of some features, this difference favoring Sunday over weekend editions may be more apparent than real, especially in light of the increasing number of once-a-week special sections in weekday editions. For example, 44% of Sunday editions but only 6% of weekday editions carry "recipes" in every issue. However, 88% of these big-circulation newspapers carry recipes in at least one of their five weekday editions.

The timing of certain features like "photography" or "music, records, tapes" is likely to affect both reading and advertising patterns. Readers with a special interest in those subjects may make more of an effort to read editions in which the features appear. Advertisers looking for a compatible editorial environment are likely to advertise in the same editions, because special-interest readers tend to be interested in ads as well as editorials.

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[1] This circulation size group was used because the great majority of these Sunday/weekend editions are published by daily newspapers in the same category.

Table 7

Comparative Incidence of Listed Standing Features or Columns in Weekday Vs. Sunday/weekend Editions
(Newspapers with 100,000+ circulation)

	Every Issue:		Every Issue +Less Often:†	
	Weekday	Sunday	Weekday	Sunday
Advice on personal finance	28%	58%	76%	67%
Astrology	92	92	93	92
Automotive	2	32	32	40
Beauty	11	29	45	41
Best food buys	2	10	78	16
Books	8	92	31	93
Bridge	86	83	88	84
Business, financial	91	94	96	96
Career advice	5	35	31	41
Child care	5	13	20	24
College	-	8	5	14
Computers, personal	2	14	22	23
Consumers, "Action Line"	31	39	47	44
Diet, nutrition	4	35	68	46
Environment, ecology	6	9	13	25
Etiquette	6	27	27	36
Farm and ranch	3	9	14	12
Fashion, men	3	20	41	42
Fashion, women	8	36	59	59
Fashion, teenage	3	10	37	28
Games and puzzles	83	91	86	91
Gardening	2	64	37	71
Health and medical	37	66	79	75
Home building, repair	-	52	27	60
Home furnishings, decorating	1	46	30	63
Household hints	22	53	45	60
Movie reviews	48	79	86	85
Movie timetable	68	77	80	77
Music, records, tapes	9	74	49	82
Op Ed page	85	92	88	92
Outdoors: camping, fishing, etc.	11	77	64	82
"People"	74	82	79	82

Table 7 (continued)

Comparative Incidence of Listed Standing Features or Columns in Weekday Vs. Sunday/weekend Editions

(Newspapers with 100,000+ circulation)

	Every Issue:		Every Issue +Less Often:†	
	Weekday	Sunday	Weekday	Sunday
Personal advice	81%	83%	84%	86%
Pets	4	41	13	47
Photography	-	33	11	39
Radio log	51	62	54	64
Real estate (other than ads)	4	69	26	73
Recipes	6	44	88	53
Religion	5	42	21	44
Restaurants	5	49	61	54
Retirement, Social Security	7	34	33	41
School news (grade, high)	12	18	24	24
Science, technology	5	25	30	44
Security & commodity quotations	84	86	88	87
Sewing patterns	45	51	59	57
Social news	44	77	63	78
Sports (spectator)	91	92	93	92
Sports (participant)	72	74	82	78
Stamps, coins	1	55	9	59
TV reviews	74	84	87	86
TV log	90	98	95	98
Theatre	62	85	77	92
Travel & resort	-	95	10	96
Weather map	94	96	94	96
Wine	-	31	51	39
Youth	7	31	20	39

†In this table, denotes "at least once a week" for weekday editions, and "at least once a month" for Sunday/weekend editions.

Other Findings on Sunday/weekend Editions

General Merchandise Advertising: Sunday/weekend vs. Weekday

About seven out of ten newspapers (71%) indicate that they carry more department store advertising in the Sunday/weekend edition than in any Monday through Friday edition (Table 8a). A somewhat smaller proportion (65%) reports the same pattern for other general merchandise advertisers. In comparison to larger newspapers, those with circulations under 10,000 are less likely to indicate that general merchandise advertisers favor Sunday over any weekday edition (Table 8b).

Mail Order Feature or Page

A relatively small proportion of Sunday/weekend editions (9%) carry a mail order feature or page, but those that do tend to have it every week (Table 9).

Zoning

In every circulation size group, zoning is somewhat less common among Sunday/weekend editions than for weekday editions. Overall, 20% of Sunday/weekend editions report zoning (Table 10), as do 27% of weekday editions. Among newspapers of 100,000 circulation and more, 67% report zoning for weekday editions, as compared with 40% for Sunday/weekend editions.

Table 8a

Volume of General Merchandise Advertising in Sunday/weekend Edition Relative to Any Single Weekday Edition

	Total Responses Weighted by:	
	Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Department Stores:		
Sunday/weekend edition has more advertising than any Monday to Friday edition	71%	74%
Sunday/weekend edition does not have more advertising	21	18
Not reported	8	8
Other General Merchandise Advertisers:		
Sunday/weekend edition has more advertising than any Monday to Friday edition	65%	67%
Sunday/weekend edition does not have more advertising	21	20
Not reported	14	13

Question: Does your Sunday or weekend edition carry a heavier volume of general merchandise advertising for department stores and all other general merchandise advertisers than any of your Monday through Friday editions?

---

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 8b

Volume of General Merchandise Advertising in Sunday/weekend Edition Relative to Any Single Weekday Edition

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Department Stores:					
Sunday/weekend edition has more advertising than any Monday to Friday edition	73%	80%	76%	73%	59%
Sunday/weekend edition does not have more advertising	19	10	14	20	35
Not reported	8	10	10	7	6
Other General Merchandise Advertisers:					
Sunday/weekend edition has more advertising than any Monday to Friday ediiton	68%	64%	69%	64%	60%
Sunday/weekend edition does not have more advertising	21	14	14	22	30
Not reported	11	22	17	14	10
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Does your Sunday or weekend edition carry a heavier volume of general merchandise advertising for department stores and all other general merchandise advertisers than any of your Monday through Friday editions?

Table 9

Mail Order Features or Pages in Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Total Responses Weighted by: Circulation‡
Carry mail order feature or page	9%	12%
Every week	7	9
Less often	2	3
Do not carry	91	88

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Carry mail order feature or page	13%	9%	11%	9%	6%
Every week	9	9	10	7	2
Less often	4	-	1	2	4
Do not carry	87	91	89	91	94
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Does the Sunday or weekend edition carry a mail order feature or page? (If "Yes") Please check how often.

---

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Table 10

Zoning of Sunday/weekend Editions

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Zoning:	20%	35%
For editorial content and advertising	11	24
For advertising only	9	11
No zoning	74	58
Not reported	6	7

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Zoning:	40%	37%	23%	11%	7%
For editorial content and advertising	29	28	11	1	1
For advertising only	11	9	12	10	6
No zoning	52	60	72	83	85
Not reported	8	3	5	6	8
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: To what extent are Sunday or weekend editions zoned?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.

‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Editorial Use of ROP Color

In all, 85% of the Sunday/weekend editions responding to the survey report editorial use of ROP color (Table 11). The majority of all newspapers with circulations of 25,000 and over use full color editorially, while those in the two smallest circulation size groups tend to limit themselves to spot color. However, even among Sunday/weekend editions with circulations under 10,000, 70% make some editorial use of ROP color.

Home Delivery of Sunday/weekend Editions

About three out of four Sunday/weekend editions (77%) indicate that at least 70% of their total circulation is home delivered (Table 12). Overall, the median percentage is 85%. Within circulation size groups, the ratio of home delivered copies to total circulation generally appears to be similar for weekdays and Sundays.[1]

---

[1] This is consistent with a 1982 study conducted by Audits and Surveys, Inc., showing that among those adults who have any newspaper home delivered, 72% have both weekday and Sunday delivery. The remainder is split about evenly between those with only weekday delivery (16%) and those with only Sunday delivery (12%).

Table 11

Editorial Use of ROP Color in Sunday/weekend Editions†

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers	Circulation
Full color (net)	39%	58%
On front or break pages only	19	25
On other pages	20	33
Spot color (net)	46	28
On front or break pages only	35	20
On other pages	11	8
Color not used editorially	11	9
Not reported	4	5

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Full color (net)	62%	65%	53%	28%	10%
On front or break pages only	25	30	27	14	8
On other pages	37	35	26	14	2
Spot color (net)	20	32	42	57	60
On front or break pages only	15	19	31	45	45
On other pages	5	13	11	12	15
Color not used editorially	10	2	2	12	24
Not reported	8	1	3	3	6
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: To what extent is ROP color used editorially in Sunday or weekend editions?

†Multiple answers have been edited to limit column totals to 100%. (e.g., if a newspaper reports using both full color and spot color, the spot color reference has been eliminated.)

Table 12

Percent of Current Sunday/weekend Circulation Home Delivered

	Total Responses Weighted by: Newspapers†	Circulation‡
Under 60%	6%	9%
60% to 69%	7	10
70% to 79%	14	18
80% to 89%	34	35
90% or more	29	17
Not reported	10	11
Median	85	82

	100,000 & over	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	Under 10,000
Under 60%	11%	6%	2%	4%	10%
60% to 69%	11	9	4	6	6
70% to 79%	21	13	9	12	15
80% to 89%	35	41	37	31	33
90% or more	10	21	38	40	24
Not reported	12	10	10	7	12
Median	80	84	88	87	83
Base: Newspapers responding=100%	(118)	(86)	(132)	(147)	(89)

Question: Approximately what percentage of your current Sunday or weekend circulation is home delivered?

†Weighting based on distribution of 768 Sunday/weekend newspapers among five circulation size groups.
‡Weighting based on distribution of 56,260,764 circulation among five circulation size groups.

Research Report

[redacted]

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. 485 Lexington Avenue New York, New York 10017

MEETING READERS' MULTIPLE NEEDS:

Content and Readership of News and Features in the Daily Press

This study is one of a series of
research studies conducted under the
auspices of the Newspaper Readership
Project, an industry-wide effort to
promote circulation and readership.

March 1984

NATIONAL STUDY OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ITS AUDIENCES

PREFACE

In May 1982, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau designed and carried out a nationwide survey of the readership of daily newspapers. The field work was conducted by Audits & Surveys, Inc. with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. The questionnaires used in the interview covered a wide range of topics: newspaper reading, television viewing, exposure to news media, readers' content preferences, ratings of the performance of the daily paper, circulation patterns, and detailed demographic information.

As part of the interview, newspaper readers were also taken through a copy of the paper they read yesterday, or the one they usually read, and asked about their readership of or interest in specific editorial and advertising items on sampled pages in that paper. These items were coded in several ways: size, use of text or illustrations, location in the paper, etc.

The results of this survey are presented in a series of detailed reports dealing with circulation issues, news habits of the American public, page traffic and ad readership, attitudes about the performance of the daily press, and the content and readership of news and features. A separate technical report on the survey, prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc., that contains copies of the questionnaires used in the study is also available.

This study was sponsored by the Newspaper Readership Project and carried out by NAB's Research Department. Charles Lehman was the author of this report.

This report examines the editorial content of daily newspapers in the United States and the ways in which people go about their reading. Individual chapters that highlight different aspects of these topics also draw on different sample bases:

> Chapter I summarizes the content of a hypothetical "average" newspaper on an average weekday. It is based on a content analysis of all editorial items of five column inches or more on sampled pages exposed to qualified yesterday readers and non-readers. The overall distribution of content categories shown in Chapter I tables is weighted to compensate for page sampling procedures, which specified that sampled pages should always include the front and back pages.
>
> Chapter II is a discussion of newspaper reading habits and the degree to which general categories of editorial and advertising content are likely to appeal to various demographic segments. The principal bases cited are "qualified yesterday readers," who represent 1,288 respondents, and "total newspaper readers," who account for 1,803 respondents.
>
> Chapters III and IV focus on reported readership of editorial items. Here the base becomes items rather than people, specifically the 36,869 items of five column inches or more on sampled pages opened by qualified yesterday readers.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Content of the Daily Newspaper

National samples of weekday newspapers drawn in 1971, 1977, and 1982 indicate that the editorial content mix has remained fairly constant during this period.

In all three survey years, five classifications account for roughly 60% of all editorial items. These are: economic news, government actions, sports, amusements, and other general interest.

Over the eleven-year period a slight trend can been seen toward more local coverage, a higher ratio of features to news, and more sports and business coverage.

Dynamics of Newspaper Reading

High page-opening figures and reports by two thirds of all yesterday readers that they went through the paper "page by page" suggest that many people who "browse" the newspaper may not know which editorial items and ads they will find relevant until they come across them. Regardless of cost, electronic media may not be able to offer readers the same advantages as the printed page.

A card-sorting task indicates that roughly 15 out of 25 specific kinds of editorial content and advertising have some appeal for an average reader. The mass-audience appeal of the newspaper depends on news of the local community, the nation and the world, but large segments also "read or look at" features and advertising.

Half (50%) of the men who "usually read" professional sports items say that this is one of the three things in the paper they care about the most. The highest-ranked item for women readers is "news about the local community," cited by 39% of those reading.

Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages

Taking each reader through a copy of the newspaper read yesterday in order to determine which sampled pages were opened and which items were read on those pages yields a more objective measure of reading. Overall, 35% of all editorial items[1] on opened pages are reported as read.

Average item readership figures are virtually identical for men and women but differ considerably for individual content categories. Average item readership tends to be slightly higher among college graduates, adults over 25 years of age, and metropolitan residents.

The percentage of editorial items read on opened pages varies with newspaper factors as well as reader characteristics. Among the factors that tend to increase item readership are: front page position, larger amount of space, and presence of an illustration. The percentage of items read on opened pages also tends to be higher for fat newspapers than for thin newspapers. The text of the report suggests several possible reasons for this unexpected finding.

---

[1] Interviewing was confined to items of five column inches or more.

DETAILED FINDINGS

I. WHAT'S IN THE DAILY NEWSPAPER?

A National Analysis of Newspaper Content

Although daily newspapers throughout the United States share certain characteristics, each newspaper is a unique publication reflecting particular editorial policies and local conditions. No national overview of newspaper content can do justice to this uniqueness, but national surveys of content serve as useful benchmarks that may detect journalistic trends over time.

Similar national newspaper readership surveys conducted in 1971, 1977 and 1982 included a detailed analysis of the editorial content of selected pages in daily newspapers. The basic purpose of the selection and weighting procedures used[1] was to make these representative of all newspaper pages in circulation, excluding those on spreads that consist entirely of classified advertising. Measurements taken on the entire base of sampled pages were limited to items of five column inches or more.

Table 1 shows the distribution of editorial items found in the three surveys, based on all items of five column inches or more. Compared with the results of the two earlier surveys, the 1982 figures generally show more similarities than differences. Those differences that do appear, such as a drop in the number of items about "government actions," may reflect the news stories breaking at a particular time, rather than a genuine trend.

---

[1] See the "Technical Appendix" prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc. for details on the conduct of this survey.

Table 1

Editorial Content of Sampled Pages in Three Survey Years*
(number of items)

	1982	1977	1971
Total items	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Economic news, actions & policies	11.6%	9.2%	9.4%
Environment, resources, population, energy	1.6	2.2	1.5
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	7.1	12.6	14.3
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	4.2	1.4	6.8
Crime	5.9	6.9	3.7
Professional sports	11.3	13.1	13.4
Other sports	4.2		
Editorials, unsigned◆	2.1	NA	NA
Editorial cartoons	1.3	0.9	NA
Other editorial page content◇	4.1	2.2	1.6
Education, child care	4.0	2.9	3.1
Cultural events, arts, reviews	2.6	2.2	2.4
Other amusements●	14.2	12.9	12.5
Personal advice columns	1.6	1.6	2.9
Other general interest○	15.4	10.4	11.0
Health, welfare, social issues	3.8	4.7	5.4
General local news★	NA	6.9	6.9
News summaries, briefs, index	1.4	2.2	NA
All other content☆	3.6	7.7	5.1

International news items	6.0%	6.3%	10.2%
National news items	4.8	3.5	6.9
State & local news items	14.0	12.4	12.7

*All editorial items of five column inches or more=100%.

◆In 1971 and 1977, unsigned editorials were classified by content (i.e., education, government actions, etc.).

◇Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.

●Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.

○Includes food, home, society, obituaries & gossip columns.

★In 1982, general local news items were classified by content (economic news, other sports, etc.).

☆Includes all other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, disasters, religion, etc.).

Any conclusions about the degree of change or stability revealed in Table 1 should be heavily qualified. Most of the content categories listed are broadly defined, so there could be shifts within a category that would not affect these figures. Another hidden change might involve shifts from a regular "standing" feature or column to news treatments of the same subjects appearing at irregular intervals.

Even in the case of the more precise content labels there may be problems in assessing changes. For example, one recent analysis of changes in the content of a popular advice column suggests that newspaper readers of 1955 might have been shocked by the kinds of advice being dispensed today.[1]

Qualifications aside, the 1982 figures suggest an increased emphasis on local news coverage. This would be consistent with a 1983 mail survey[2] in which 38% of the dailies responding say that since 1979 they have increased the ratio of local and state coverage to national and international coverage. (Only 8% report moving in the opposite direction.) Also, 21% say that they have increased the ratio of features to hard news, while only 10% have made the reverse move. Four out of ten dailies (40%) say that they have increased sports coverage.

Any analysis of editorial content based on the number of items is incomplete without some attention to space. Table 1 indicates that items like comics, puzzles, horoscopes and TV listings represent more than 14% of all editorial items, but Table 2 shows that 76% of these "other amusements" items are less than ten column inches.[3]

---

[1] Charlotte Hays, "The Evolution of Ann Landers: From Prim to Progressive," Public Opinion, December/January 1984, pp 11-13.

[2] See "1983 Newspaper Inventory: Summary Tables for Weekday Editions," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1983.

[3] Appendix Table 1 shows the same data percentaged in the opposite direction (i.e., the percent of items under 10" classified as "other amusements.")

Table 2

Distribution of Editorial Items, by Size and Content*
(1982)

	5-9+ Inches	10-19+ Inches	20+ Inches
Total Items	38%	37%	25%
Economic news, actions & policies	30%	43%	27%
Environment, resources, population, energy	33	45	22
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	33	48	19
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	25	41	34
Crime	41	44	15
Professional sports	32	36	32
Other sports	37	37	26
Editorials, unsigned	26	55	19
Editorial cartoons	19	63	18
Other editorial page content♦	13	29	58
Education, child care	34	39	27
Cultural events, arts, reviews	26	37	37
Other amusements	76	16	8
Personal advice columns	10	57	33
Other general interest	38	34	28
Health, welfare, social issues	32	43	25
News summaries, briefs, index	44	39	17
All other content	40	39	21

International news items	28%	42%	30%
National news items	28	53	19
State & local news items	32	43	25

*Percentages should be read across. (Table shows that 38% of all items on sampled pages are at least five but less than ten column inches, etc.) News stories may have been longer: "jumps" were not measured unless they appeared on sampled pages.

♦All "Letters to the Editor" were measured as a single block of items.

Table 3 shows the effect of item size more clearly.[1] This table details the median size of items in each of the editorial content classifications and the distribution of content weighted by space.

The classification showing the most striking difference from the median size of the average item (13.2 column inches) is "other amusements," which is comprised mainly of comic strips. The median size for this classification is only 6.6 column inches, with the result that even though "other amusements" represents over 14% of all items, it accounts for only 7% of the space given to measured items of editorial content.

The typical size of items in almost all of the remaining content classifications tends to be larger than the "average" editorial item. The item classification generally largest in size is "other editorial page content," with a median of 21.4 column inches. This classification would be much closer to the overall average if "letters to the editor" were excluded. (Each block of "letters" was measured as a single item.)

---

[1] Note that Table 3 and these remarks refer only to editorial items of five column inches or more.

Table 3

Distribution of Editorial Content Weighted by Median Size of Item*
(1982)

	Percent of All Items	Median Size in Inches	Percent Weighted by Size
Total Items	100.0%	13.2	100.0%
Economic news, actions, & policies	11.6%	14.2	12.7%
Enviornment, resources, population, energy	1.6	13.8	1.7
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	7.1	13.5	7.2
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	4.2	16.1	5.1
Crime	5.9	12.0	5.3
Professional sports	11.3	15.0	12.7
Other sports	4.2	13.5	4.3
Editorials, unsigned	2.1	14.4	2.3
Editorial cartoons	1.3	14.9	1.5
Other editorial page content♦	4.1	21.4	6.6
Education, child care	4.0	14.1	4.2
Cultural events, arts, reviews	2.6	16.5	3.2
Other amusements	14.2	6.6	7.0
Personal advice columns	1.6	17.0	2.0
Other general interest	15.4	13.5	15.5
Health, welfare, social issues	3.8	14.2	4.1
News summaries, briefs, index	1.4	11.5	1.2
All other content	3.6	12.6	3.4
International news items	6.0%	15.2	6.8%
National news items	4.8	14.2	5.1
State & local news items	14.0	14.2	14.9

*All items of five column inches or more=100%.
♦Each block of "Letters to the Editor" tallied as a single item.

Content of Smaller Editorial Items

In this study newspaper pages were sampled primarily to measure page opening and the reading of editorial items, not simply to describe the content of the newspaper. For this reason, the research design specified that only items of five column inches or more should be checked. This limitation was imposed in order to avoid tiring or irritating respondents as they went through items on sampled pages.

In view of this restriction on the size of items, a subsample of 144 newspapers was used to check the distribution of content of editorial items *under* five column inches. As Table 4 shows, the incidence of various kinds of content found in these very small editorial items is quite similar to that found in large items. Certain service features or other items of general interest appear more frequently among these small-space items, as do economic news briefs.

Table 4

Content of Larger and Smaller Editorial Items

	5 Col. Inches & Over	Under 5 Col. Inches†
Total Items	100.0%	100.0%
Economic news, actions & policies	11.6%	13.8%
Environment, resources, population, energy	1.6	1.5
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	7.1	7.5
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	4.2	3.5
Crime	5.9	6.9
Professional sports	11.3	9.0
Other sports	4.2	4.4
Editorials, unsigned	2.1	1.5
Editorial cartoons	1.3	0.7
Other editorial page content◆	4.1	3.1
Education, child care	4.0	5.6
Cultural events, arts, reviews	2.6	2.9
Other amusements◇	14.2	10.9
Personal advice	1.6	1.2
Other general interest●	15.4	18.3
Health, welfare, social issues	3.8	3.5
News summaries, briefs, index	1.4	1.5
All other content○	3.6	4.2

International news items	6.0%	5.6%
National news items	4.8	4.0
State & local news items	14.0	17.4

†Data on items under five column inches are based on Subsample B of the survey. (See "Technical Appendix" for details.)

◆Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.

◇Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.

●Includes food, home, society, obituaries & gossip columns.

○All other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, accidents & disasters, religion, etc.)

Hard News Dominates Front Pages

It is difficult for any classification scheme, no matter how elaborate, to specify the exact amount of "hard news" in a daily newspaper. Unsigned editorials and political columns, for example, are considered "opinion" or "commentary," but these can sometimes include hard news not found elsewhere in the paper.

In this 1982 survey, 25% of all editorial items over five column inches were categorized as national, international, or state and local news items. These dealt with topics such as war, government actions, education, labor, etc. These three composite headings represent roughly half of the total hard news content.[1]

The broad category of "general interest" includes both features and a few kinds of news items, mostly local. At one time a large proportion of these items would have been called "women's interest" items, but in our rapidly changing society male readers may also be interested in food, home furnishings and similar topics. The general interest category also includes weather maps and forecasts, human interest stories, personal advice columns and obituaries. (Editorial page content and the "amusements" category, shown separately here, can also be considered general interest material.)

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[1] Some hard news items about labor, taxation, transportation, the environment, etc. are organized on a regional level, or refer to both local and national conditions within the same article. (For detailed content categories, see Appendix Exhibit 1.)

As Table 5 shows, items classified as international, national, or state and local news figure more prominently near the front part of the newspaper. On the front page itself, 55% of all items fall into one of these three classifications, as compared with only 16% of the items on the fourth interior spread.[1]

Table 5

Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified
As International, National, State and Local Items,
by Location in Paper

	All Three Categories	International	National	State & Local
Total Items	25%	6%	5%	14%
Front page	55%	23%	11%	21%
First interior spread	30	9	7	14
Second interior spread	23	6	5	12
Third interior spread	21	4	4	13
Fourth interior spread	16	2	2	12

NOTE: Percentages to be read across. That is, "international" items represent 6% of total items but 23% of items on the front page, etc.

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[1] "Fourth interior spread" does not necessarily denote pages 8 and 9. Each respondent was interviewed on the first and last page of the newspaper and on four randomly selected interior spreads. (If one of the specified pages was the first page of a section, the respondent was also interviewed about the back page of the same section.) The position of a spread (first to fourth) is best defined in terms of its proximity to the front page.

Conversely, soft news items and features tend to be found further back in the newspaper. As Table 6 shows, for example, "amusements" represents 14% of all items of five column inches or more, but only 1% of the items on the front page. "General interest" items are more likely to appear on interior spreads than on the front page but tend to appear closer to the front of the paper than either amusements or professional sports items.

Table 6

Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified as General Interest, Amusements and Professional Sports, by Location in Paper

	General Interest†	Amusements‡	Professional Sports
Total Items	15%	14%	11%
Front page	10%	1%	1%
First interior spread	18	9	2
Second interior spread	17	12	9
Third interior spread	13	17	18
Fourth interior spread	11	28	19

NOTE: Percentages to be read across. That is, "general interest" items represent 15% of all items but only 10% of the items on the front page, etc.

†Includes weather map, food, home, society, obituaries, gossip columns, etc.
‡Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.

What Was In the Headlines During the Survey Period?

The very nature of news is such that a newspaper's relative emphasis on local, state, national and international coverage can show short-term or day-to-day differences as well as long-range trends. Table 5 indicates that during the survey period the front page of a typical daily newspaper carried roughly half as many "national" items as "international" or "state and local" items. Because of the particular news stories breaking at the time of the survey, this pattern cannot be taken as representative of other periods during 1982.

Exhibit 1, which details some of the major national and international stories appearing during the survey period, shows that the Falkland Island crisis was a running news story for the entire two-week period.[1] This single fact largely accounts for the dominance of "international" over "national" front-page items. At other times--for instance, in October editions during a Presidential election year--the reverse pattern might well apply.

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[1] Half of all respondents (50%) named the Falkland Island crisis as the biggest news story they had found out about "yesterday" or "today." No other story was mentioned by as much as 5% of the sample.

Exhibit 1

Some Major Stories Appearing During Survey Period

5/17/82	Falkland Islands: British warplanes attack 2 Argentine ships. Palestinian self-rule talks expected to resume.
5/18/82	U.N. talks resume in Falkland crisis. Supreme Court: anti-bias rules cover school employees as well as pupils.
5/19/82	Brezhnev affirms readiness to talk on strategic arms. Drysdale Securities defaults on debt.
5/20/82	U.N. chief appeals for time to gain Falkland accord. Corporate profits off 17.5% for first quarter. Begin narrowly survives no-confidence vote.
5/21/82	British quit Falkland talks; authorize attack. Senate turns back efforts to modify 1983 tax cuts.
5/24/82	6 Argentine jets reported downed; British ship hit. Salvador blocks enforcement of land program. 6 ex-Cabinet officers offer plan to cut deficit.
5/25/82	8 Common Market nations extend ban against Argentina. Iran says it has recaptured port and taken 30,000 Iraqi prisoners.
5/26/82	Argentina calls for negotiations. E.P.A. assailed on rule for lead in gasoline.
5/27/82	Next British objective: retaking Port Stanley. Senate panel cuts proposal for aid to Salvador. Congress vetoes F.T.C. rules on disclosure of car defects.
5/28/82	Britain launches 2 Falkland drives out of beachhead. House votes down all its bills to set 1983 budget goals. Senate approves $5 billion program to stimulate housing industry.

Chapter Summary

Three national surveys of the daily newspaper's editorial content were conducted over an eleven-year period. The results suggest that newspaper content is subject to both long-range trends and short-term variations, but all of the categories found in 1971 still appear in today's newspapers, and in roughly the same proportions, based on item counts.

No hard and fast conclusions can be reached from these samples drawn at three fairly isolated points in time. For example, the biggest news story throughout the 1982 survey period was the British and Argentinian struggle over the Falkland Islands. At other times top stories might have been less dramatic in character. But over the eleven years there appears to be a slight trend toward more sports coverage, more business coverage, and a somewhat higher ratio of features to hard news.

II. IN THE INFORMATION SUPERMARKET: HOW PEOPLE READ

In the so-called electronic era, it is easy to forget that one can gain more information in less time from the daily newspaper than from TV, radio or interactive cable systems. The physical characteristics of a newspaper page provide ideal browsing conditions for the remarkable scanning capabilities of the human eye. The varied content appearing in the daily paper sustains the wide-ranging interests of the human mind.

Editorial research suggests that the mind of a typical newspaper reader operates in extraordinary and surprising ways, except in certain narrowly defined contexts. Individual members of the public may be attracted to particular newspaper items that cut across a number of content categories, but not to other items in the very same categories. Nevertheless, the "menu" approach of interactive systems assumes that users know in advance precisely which categories of information will satisfy their needs.

When it comes to everyday news and advertising, serendipity may give the newspaper a strategic edge over electronic systems: The newspaper makes it easy for readers to find information they want even if they don't know exactly what they are looking for until they come across it. To the general public, interactive systems may be an impressive technological solution for a non-existent problem.

Self-descriptions of newspaper reading habits reflect the newspaper's value as a browsing medium. For example, two-thirds of the yesterday readers in this national sample report going through most of the paper "page by page" (Table 7).

Table 7

How Yesterday Readers Report Going Through the Paper Versus Percent Opening Average Page

	Went Through Page by Page	Only Looked at Certain Pages, Sections	Average Page Opening†
Total yesterday readers	67%	32%	77%
By Sex: Male	66%	33%	75%
Female	69	31	79
By Age: 18-24 years	50%	49%	75%
25-34 years	63	36	75
35-44 years	65	35	77
45-54 years	74	26	80
55-64 years	76	24	78
65 years or older	74	25	78
By Education:			
College graduate	75%	24%	77%
1-3 years college	65	35	76
High school graduate	67	33	79
Some high school or less	63	36	74
By Household Income:			
$35,000 & over	67%	33%	75%
$25,000-$34,999	68	32	76
$15,000-$24,999	64	35	77
$10,000-$14,999	70	30	79
Under $10,000	65	32	78
By Locality Type:			
Central city	65%	35%	76%
Suburb	67	32	77
Non-metropolitan	70	29	78

Base: Qualified yesterday readers=100%
(In some cases figures in the first two columns do not total 100% because "no answers" are not shown.)

Questions: Did you go through most of the paper page by page, reading whatever was interesting, or did you only look at certain pages or sections?

†How about this page? Do you recall opening it when you read the paper, whether or not you stopped to look at anything?

In every major demographic segment analyzed, at least half of all readers say that they went through yesterday's edition page by page. The lowest level of reported page-by-page scanning (50%) is found among adults under 25 years of age. Among the highest (75%) were college graduates, who are probably most efficient in scanning the newspaper's pages.

The question on how readers go through the newspaper cannot be regarded as a precise behavioral measure because it can also function as an attitude question. For instance, wome readers' answers may amount to judgments about whether the great bulk of the newspaper's content is interesting, or only "certain" items. In either case, the finding that roughly half of the youngest adults report selective reading is cause for concern, especially since infrequent weekday reading is common among this age group.

When yesterday readers are actually taken through a random selection of pages from the newspaper they read, the percent who report opening the average page shows relatively little variation, ranging only from 74% to 80% for the major demographic groups shown in Table 6. This is a much more objective measure than the question on how people go through the paper, and it suggests that the physical act of reading a paper sometimes involves what might be called a page-turning "habit." Even some selective readers may turn all the pages in order to locate those "certain" pages or items of greatest interest.

As might be expected, the percent of readers opening the average page is somewhat higher for thinner newspapers, ranging from 74% for newspapers with 61 pages or more, to 83% for newspapers with 24 pages or less (excluding pages that consist entirely of classified advertising). However, so far as the absolute number of pages is concerned, the readers of fatter newspapers open to a larger number of pages and are more likely to read items on opened pages once they have turned to them (Table 8).

In other words, the more a newspaper gives readers, the more they are likely to read, even though this may represent a smaller proportion of the newspaper's total number of pages.

Table 8

Average Page Opening and Percent of Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper*

Number of Pages in Newspaper	Average Page Opening: Percent	Average Page Opening: # of Pages†	% of Items Read on Opened Pages
24 or less	83%	20	29%
25-40	78	25	34
41-60	76	38	38
61 & over	74	59	41

*Excludes those pages that consist entirely of classified advertising.

†Estimates based on the following average values: for 24 pages or less, 24; for 25-40 pages, 32; for 41-60 pages, 50; for 61 pages & over, 80.

Given these patterns of reading, it might be expected that average reading time would be longer in large metropolitan areas where newspapers tend to be fattest, than in smaller cities and non-metropolitan areas. The reported time spent reading yesterday's newspaper indicates that this is the case (Table 9), even though respondent estimates of this type are not likely to be very precise.

Table 9

Mean Number of Pages in Newspaper Read and Minutes Spent Reading, by Size of Metropolitan Area

	Mean Number of Pages†	Minutes Spent Reading
Metro area, 1 million & over	81	52
Metro area, under 1 million	43	40
Non-metropolitan area	31	37

†Excludes those pages that consist entirely of classified advertising.

This study employed two separate approaches to measuring the readership of newspaper content:

1) Respondents were given a shuffled deck of twenty-five cards, each of which described a general type of news or editorial content (21 cards) or advertising (4 cards). They were then asked to put aside "the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at," and finally, to "pick out the three which are the kinds of things in the paper you care about the most."
2) Interviewers showed respondents copies of newspapers they reported reading yesterday and asked them about their page opening and reading of items on the front page, the back page and four interior spreads. Marked newspapers were then returned to the head office of Audits and Surveys, coded according to content and tabulated.[1] (Readership of items on opened pages will be discussed in Chapter III.)

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[1] See "Technical Appendix" prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc. for further details.

For any given category of content the first approach, with percentages based on readers, produces much higher "readership" figures than the second approach, based on items. Part of the discrepancy reflects a tendency among readers to read some but not all of the items in a given content category.[1]

From the card-sorting task it is possible to gain an idea of the range of categories that attract the average reader. In general, newspaper readers put aside about ten cards, thereby implying that (at least sometimes) they "read or look at" a majority of different categories of editorial items and ads (Table 10). This tends to confirm other research[2] indicating that the newspaper offers multiple attractions for a typical reader.

Although adults under 25, low-income readers, and those with less than a high school education tend to put aside more cards, the average number of categories "usually read" is at least fourteen in every major demographic segment. In other words, variety is an intrinsic part of the daily newspaper's appeal. The single-interest reader appears to be a rare animal indeed. Hard news may provide the basic audience franchise, but a newspaper that skimps on features and advertising would probably satisfy very few readers.

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[1] The rules of the card-sorting task should be kept in mind. When respondents put aside the categories they don't usually read or look at, this is not the same as saying that they usually read the remaining categories. However, "usually read" serves as a convenient label.

[2] See "The Sunday Newspaper: A Five-Market Study," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980, and "Weekday Reading Patterns: A Two-Market Study," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

Table 10

Average (Mean) Number of Editorial
And Advertising Items "Usually Read"*
(out of 25 Listed)

		Number (of 25) Usually Read
Total		15.3
By Sex:	Males	14.9
	Females	15.6
By Age:	18-24 years	14.3
	25-34 years	15.7
	35-44 years	15.6
	45-54 years	15.7
	55-64 years	15.9
	65 years or older	14.7
By Education:		
	College graduate	15.9
	1-3 years college	15.6
	High school graduate	15.4
	Some high school or less	14.2
By Marital Status:		
	Married	15.6
	Divorced, separated, widowed	14.8
	Never married	14.6
By Household Income:		
	$35,000 & over	15.1
	$25,000-$34,999	16.1
	$15,000-$24,999	15.4
	$10,000-$14,999	15.1
	Under $10,000	14.3
By Locality Type:		
	Central City	15.6
	Suburb	15.3
	Non-metropolitan	14.9

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Question: Each of these cards contains a different kind of news, feature or advertising appearing in most daily newspapers. Please look through them and put to one side the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at.

*Based on number of cards not put aside.

Even though variety is obviously important, the card-sorting task also confirms the importance of hard news. All six of the content categories reported as "usually read"[1] by the largest percentage of adult readers are hard news categories, beginning with "news about the local community," chosen by 89% of all readers in the sample (Table 11).

The card-sorting task deliberately mixed two kinds of content usually kept separate--namely, editorial content and advertising. This approach to a common benchmark indicates that advertising holds interest for a larger percentage of adult readers than several kinds of editorial content, including business and financial news, political opinion columns, and book reviews.

Even in the sexually liberated atmosphere of the 1980s, the level of reading for certain kinds of content is closely linked to the sex of the reader. For men, the six hard news categories mentioned above are the core content of the newspaper; even the sixth ranking category ("news about local politics and government") is selected by 77% of all men readers. The only one of the nineteen remaining categories that approaches this figure for men is "sports news about professional teams," at 71%.

Women readers show quite a different pattern. For women, "news about the local community," at 90%, clearly outranks every other listed subject. However, the five other kinds of hard news listed are matched in appeal by "advice columns" (81%), "food pages" (81%), and "supermarket ads" (80%).

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[1] In this section of the report, expressions such as "usually read" denote cards not put aside in the card-sorting task.

Table 11

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Sex

Editorial	Total Adults	Males	Females
News about local community	89%	87%	90%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	86	89	83
International or world news	84	88	80
News about President, Congress	78	82	75
News briefs, summary of news	77	79	76
News about local politics, gov't.	74	77	72
News about celebrities	71	65	77
TV program listings	67	65	70
Advice columns	65	46	81
Calendar of local events	61	57	65
Letters to the editor	60	57	63
Food pages	59	33	81
Editorials, editor's opinions	58	58	58
Comic strips, funnies	57	61	55
Obituaries	53	46	59
Sports news. local schools, etc.	51	63	40
Business & financial news	50	60	41
Sports news: professional teams	49	71	29
Political opinion columns	47	52	43
Book reviews	29	24	33
Crossword puzzle	23	19	27
Advertising			
Supermarket ads	64%	45%	80%
Store ads for clothing	62	46	76
Classified or want ads	60	64	57
Movie ads	56	56	55

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Question: Each of these cards contains a different kind of news, feature or advertising item appearing in most daily newspapers. Please look through them and put to one side the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at.

Younger and Older Readers Have Different Interests

Research consistently identifies age as a critical influence on daily newspaper reading. In the present survey, results of the card-sorting task show that younger and older readers are attracted to very different kinds of content.

"News about the local community" and "news about the economy" are read by more than eight out of ten readers in all age groups, but readers under 25 years old may be even more attracted to "movie ads," which are usually read by 89% of this age group (Table 12). Among the youngest adult readers, more than three out of four show interest in "classified or want ads" (78%), while about the same proportion (76%) indicated that they usually read "news about celebrities." Content categories that involve political or government issues have less appeal for this age group: "editorials, editor's opinions" (read by only 32%); "political opinion columns" (by 28%); "news about local politics and government" (by 58%).

In contrast, only 24% of the readers over 65 years old indicate that they usually read "movie ads," and only 37% express interest in "classified or want ads," whereas 65% usually read "editorials, editor's opinions" and 53% read "political opinion columns."

Interest in several content categories tends to peak in the middle age groups, especially "news about the economy" and "business and financial news."

Table 12

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Age

Editorial	18-24 Years	25-34 Years	35-44 Years	45-64 Years	65 Yrs. & Older
News about local community	85%	88%	89%	92%	88%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	83	89	87	88	81
International or world news	73	88	86	86	83
News about President, Congress	62	78	81	84	81
News briefs, summary of news	68	80	82	80	74
News about local politics, gov't.	58	74	76	81	78
News about celebrities	76	74	69	71	65
TV program listings	72	70	62	65	68
Advice columns	59	62	66	69	67
Calendar of local events	60	69	61	57	58
Letters to the editor	38	58	62	72	67
Food pages	43	58	61	66	62
Editorials, editor's opinions	32	55	63	70	65
Comic strips, funnies	72	58	55	54	49
Obituaries	36	42	51	65	70
Sports news: local schools, etc.	59	51	55	47	44
Business & financial news	38	52	52	57	44
Sports news: professional teams	54	48	50	46	46
Political opinion columns	28	47	46	57	53
Book reviews	21	31	33	32	23
Crossword puzzle	25	21	23	24	25
Advertising					
Supermarket ads	52%	63%	64%	69%	71%
Store ads for clothing	66	66	64	60	52
Classified or want ads	78	69	61	55	37
Movie ads	89	73	57	38	24

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Education Affects Reading Patterns

The card-sorting approach to readership measurement elicits different patterns of response from people at differing levels of education. This can be seen most readily by contrasting college graduates with those lacking high school diplomas.

Regardless of education, roughly nine out of ten readers show some interest in "news about the local community" (Table 13). However, the college educated are much more likely to express interest in developements beyond their immediate residential areas. For example, 94% of college graduates "usually read" international or world news, compared with 76% of those lacking a high school diploma. College graduates also show more interest in political issues, business and finance, and book reviews.

Among the few content categories more likely to be read by those at the lower end of the educational scale are food pages (62%, vs. 52% for college graduates), obituaries (65% vs. 47%) and supermarket ads (70% vs. 53%).

It must be remembered that the card-sorting task is fairly abstract. Instead of specific items, it brings to mind the idea of broadly defined content categories. This kind of approach can be contaminated by a respondent's perception of reading interests that are "proper" for his or her social position. Some college graduates may overstate their reading of international news and understate their interest in supermarket advertising. Of course, rankings also reflect reading opportunities. Few daily newspapers regularly run book reviews, thus few usually read them.

Table 13

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education

Editorial	College Graduate	1-3 Yrs College	High School Graduate	Some High School or Less
News about local community	89%	89%	88%	88%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	91	88	84	83
International or world news	94	89	80	76
News about President, Congress	87	81	73	76
News briefs, summary of news	84	84	74	69
News about local politics, gov't.	81	79	72	67
News about celebrities	73	77	72	60
TV program listings	64	64	70	67
Advice columns	61	66	67	63
Calendar of local events	64	64	63	51
Letters to the editor	70	63	58	53
Food pages	52	54	64	62
Editorials, editor's opinions	70	59	54	55
Comic strips, funnies	59	57	59	54
Obituaries	47	43	54	65
Sports news: local schools, etc.	51	50	54	45
Business & financial news	67	51	46	40
Sports news: professional teams	51	54	48	42
Political opinion columns	57	51	44	42
Book reviews	44	37	25	15
Crossword puzzle	21	26	24	21
Advertising				
Supermarket ads	53%	58%	69%	70%
Store ads for clothing	57	60	68	59
Classified or want ads	53	59	65	58
Movie ads	55	64	61	39

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

The Combined Effects of Age and Education

Demographic classifications are useful analytic tools but may obscure the fact that each individual newspaper reader embodies a complex array of characteristics, including sex, age, education, occupation, income group, geographic region, and so forth. No analysis can lay bare the full complexity involved in readers' responses to newspaper content, but additional insights may be gained by examining the combined effects of several variables.

Table 14 shows responses to the card-sorting task by readers in two educational groups within two age groups.[1] These data reveal several different kinds of patterns but generally confirm that interest in most kinds of newspaper content is higher among the college educated and adults who are 45 or older.

Education appears to exert more influence than age does on interest in subjects like international news, business and finance, news briefs and book reviews. Conversely, age seems to be the more critical factor for advice columns, editorial page material, comic strips, obituaries, classified advertising and movie advertising.

Additional data on reading patterns from the card-sorting task can be found in Appendix Tables 2, 3 and 4.

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[1] It should be pointed out that even though the two educational groups in Table 13 fall within the age ranges shown, this does not mean that the groups are "matched" by age. For example, among those who are 45 or older, the average or median age may be lower for those with college backgrounds than for those who have not gone beyond high school.

Table 14

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education within Age*

Editorial	18-34 years old		45 years & older	
	Some Coll+	HS Grad or Less	Some Coll+	HS Grad or Less
News about local community	87%	86%	91%	90%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	90	82	88	84
International or world news	91	73	92	82
News about President, Congress	82	62	85	82
News briefs, summary of news	84	67	82	75
News about local politics, gov't.	77	58	85	78
News about celebrities	78	73	75	65
TV program listings	67	63	61	74
Advice columns	60	61	70	67
Calendar of local events	65	65	59	55
Letters to the editor	59	41	76	67
Food pages	47	56	60	67
Editorials, editor's opinions	53	38	76	65
Comic strips, funnies	61	66	52	52
Obituaries	38	41	59	70
Sports news: local schools, etc.	54	55	42	47
Business & financial news	53	40	65	46
Sports news: professional teams	55	47	50	44
Political opinion columns	49	30	60	54
Book reviews	36	18	44	23
Crossword puzzle	20	25	30	22
Advertising				
Supermarket ads	52%	63%	61%	74%
Store ads for clothing	62	70	52	60
Classified or want ads	67	79	41	50
Movie ads	76	84	34	32

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

*The age group from 35 to 44 years has been excluded to highlight differences between the extremes of the age distribution of readers.

Frequent and Infrequent Readers Have Similar Interests...But

As Table 15 shows, the card-sorting task reveals a number of similarities between frequent and infrequent readers of daily newspapers. For example, "news about the local community" and "news about the economy" rank first and second among both groups. At the other end of the spectrum, "book reviews" and "crossword puzzles" attract the smallest percentage of both groups.

In spite of this superficial resemblance, overall patterns of interest suggest a few important differences between regular and occasional readers. An examination of the twenty-one categories of editorial content shows that "comic strips, funnies" represents the only case in which infrequent readers match or surpass frequent readers in the percent who usually read such content. On the other hand, frequent readers are much more likely to read material bearing on political issues. In contrast to editorial content, usual reading is higher among infrequent readers for all four kinds of advertising included in the card-sorting task.

In evaluating these differences, it is important to note that frequent and infrequent reader groups also differ in their demographic composition. On the whole, infrequent readers tend to be younger, less well educated and less affluent. (See Appendix Table 6.)

Table 15

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Frequency of Newspaper Reading

Editorial	Frequent Readers†	Infrequent Readers‡
News about local community	90%	86%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	87	84
International or world news	86	79
News about President, Congress	81	71
News briefs, summary of news	81	69
News about local politics, gov't.	79	64
News about celebrities	74	64
TV program listings	68	66
Advice columns	66	61
Calendar of local events	63	57
Letters to the editor	65	49
Food pages	59	58
Editorials, editor's opinions	64	44
Comic strips, funnies	57	59
Obituaries	58	41
Sports news: local schools, etc.	52	47
Business & financial news	53	42
Sports news: professional teams	52	41
Political opinion columns	52	35
Book reviews	31	25
Crossword puzzle	24	23
Advertising		
Supermarket ads	63%	65%
Store ads for clothing	61	64
Classified or want ads	56	68
Movie ads	53	63

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

†Read four or five out of past five weekdays.

‡Read a daily (or Sunday) newspaper at least occasionally, but less than four of the past five weekdays.

How Much Do They Care About the Things They Read?

Readership and involvement are separate issues. Some kinds of content that are read by a minority of the total audience may be very important to those readers.[1] In order to explore the relationship between reading and involvement, the second step in the card-sorting task asked respondents to pick out the three things in the newspaper they "care about the most."

The figures generated in this way--that is, the percentage of those usually reading a category who care most about that kind of item--might be described as a measure of the item's "intensity of appeal" among readers. As Table 16 shows, the ranking of the twenty-five items according to their intensity of appeal is quite different from their ranking on readership alone.

First, it should be noted that no more than half of the readers of any of the listed categories identify that subject as one of the three they care most about. This finding is hardly surprising, in view of the fact that the average newspaper reader appears to read about fifteen of the twenty-five listed categories with some frequency.

News about the world, the local community and the economy rank very high in intensity of appeal, but for men the highest level of involvement is found among readers of sports news about professional teams. Among women, the three hard news categories previously mentioned generate more involvement than any other subject, but advice columns and supermarket ads are also high-ranking items.

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[1] For another approach to this subject see "New Dimensions from Newspaper Recall Scores," Media General Research Department, November 1976.

Table 16

"Intensity of Appeal"* of Newspaper Items, by Sex

Editorial	Total Readers	Male Readers	Female Readers
International or world news	43%	48%	38%
Sports news: professional teams	41	50	20
News about local community	35	32	39
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	33	36	30
Advice columns	23	9	29
Obituaries	20	16	22
Business & finanacial news	19	24	14
Comic strips, funnies	19	19	19
Food pages	19	6	23
News briefs, summary of news	19	19	20
News about President, Congress	18	21	15
News about local politics, gov't.	18	19	17
Sports news: local schools, etc.	16	22	9
Editorials, editor's opinions	15	15	14
Crossword puzzle	13	13	13
TV program listings	11	11	11
Letters to the editor	8	7	9
News about celebrities	8	5	10
Calendar of local events	7	6	8
Book reviews	6	5	7
Political opinion columns	5	7	4
Advertising			
Supermarket ads	23%	9%	29%
Classified or want ads	21	23	19
Store ads for clothing	9	5	11
Movie ads	8	9	8

Base: Total who usually read each type of item=100%

Question: Now, from the cards you have left, please pick out the three which are the kinds of things in the paper you care about the most.

*Proportion of those reading each category who say it is one of the three things in the newspaper they "care about the most."

Chapter Summary

The content and makeup of the daily newspaper make it the browsing medium *par excellence*. Readers familiar with the newspaper are aware that it offers an easily scanned combination of hard news, features and advertising--a comfortable mixture of the predictable and the surprising.

The newspaper's value as a browsing medium is reflected in the finding that two out of three readers report going through most of the paper "page by page." A separate measure obtained by taking yesterday readers through a random sample of pages in the newspapers they read indicates that the average page is opened by 77% of issue readers. Although the percentage opening the average page is somewhat lower for fatter newspapers, readers of these papers actually open to a larger number of pages, read more items on opened pages and spend more time with the paper.

One of the newspaper's greatest assets is clearly the variety of information it contains. A card-sorting approach to measuring readership indicates that the typical newspaper reader devotes at least some attention to about fifteen out of twenty-five listed kinds of editorial and advertising matter. The daily newspaper's basic franchise depends on hard news about the nation, the local community and the economy, but advertising, sports, amusements and other features are also important to many readers.

III. THE READING OF EDITORIAL ITEMS IN YESTERDAY'S NEWSPAPER

Pitfalls in Measuring Item Readership

Any report on the reading of specific kinds of newspaper items should acknowledge the tentative nature of such measures. A methodological report could devote an entire chapter to the problems involved; for the purposes of this report it may be enough to note that most of the problems reflect one or more of three factors.

1. Small bases

   As mentioned in the preface, this research was conducted with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. Altogether, 1,288 qualified readers of yesterday newspapers were asked about 36,869 editorial items (unweighted total).

   These are not 36,869 independent measures; all were obtained from the same 1,288 readers. Moreover, daily newspapers contain so many kinds of editorial items that the bases for analytic cells can become quite small. For example, personal advice columns account for only 488 items exposed to qualifed readers, and this base rapidly dwindles if broken into four educational groups, six age groups, etc.

   The card-sorting task discussed in Chapter II was included as a parallel approach in this study mainly because of the small-base problem. Without some device of this type, it is difficult for a large national survey to obtain any measure of reader interest in items like crossword puzzles.

2. Interrelated variables

   When a national study is conducted with respondents who read many different newspapers published in specific localities, factors influencing attitudes and behavior cannot be neatly parceled out as they are in laboratory experiments. In real life, the contamination of one variable by several others hampers the analysis of data.

For example, it is reasonable to ask how the number of pages in a newspaper affects the reading of editorial items. Any effort to answer this apparently simple question is complicated by the fact that readers of thin papers and fat papers tend to live in different kinds of localities (Table 17). The mean number of pages in the newspaper also varies with circulation, publishing cycle, day of the week, census region, and the reader's educational level.

Attempts to tackle this problem by analyzing the data on number of pages within locality type, publishing cycle, etc., are soon confounded by the small-base problem.

Table 17

Mean Number of Pages* in Newspapers Read by Qualified Yesterday Readers, by Selected Variables

	Mean		Mean
By Locality Type:		By Publishing Cycle:	
Central city	65	AM--morning	67
Metro suburban	61	PM--afternoon	39
Non-metropolitan	31	All-day	69
By Circulation:		By Weekday Editions:	
250,000 & over	91	Monday	43
100,000-250,000	58	Tuesday	40
50,000-100,000	44	Wednesday	60
25,000-50,000	38	Thursday	69
Under 25,000	23	Friday	63
By Census Region:		By Reader's Education:	
Northeast	67	College graduate	60
North Central	45	1-3 years college	58
South	47	High school graduate	54
West	64	Some high school or less	48

*Excludes spreads consisting entirely of classified advertising.

3. Readers' "Categories" of Editorial Items Vary Widely

When clear-cut guides are provided, it is a fairly simple matter for different people to achieve a high level of consistency in the way they sort editiorial

> items into categories. In the absence of guidelines, however, other research[1] shows that individual readers have unique ways of classifying content.
>
> Overlapping categories and other discrepancies in the way newspaper readers and researchers classify the same item may have unpredictable effects on the outcome of readership studies.

Despite the problems described above, from our results it is possible to draw a few conclusions about the reading of editorial items, but the level of detail which can be presented is necessarily limited.

Overall Figures on Item Readership

Table 18 shows the percent of items read on opened pages for total adult readers, men and women. First, it might be noted that these figures referring to specific items in specific newspapers tend to place newspaper reading in a different perspective than the results of the more general card-sorting task described in Chapter II. For example, a higher proportion of women said they "usually read" news about the local community (90%) than international or world news (80%). However, in daily newspapers read by women during the survey period, international news items had a higher probability of being read (37%, vs. 29% for state and local items).

In part this difference between usual reading and yesterday reading reflects the fact that it is not possible in a large national survey to pinpoint items about the reader's "local community." However, item readership is also affected by survey timing. As mentioned in Chapter I, the Falkland Islands invasion was a running story throughout the survey period and was regarded as the "biggest" story by 50% of all respondents.

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[1] See "The Newspaper in Readers' Minds: An Analysis of Readers' Content Perceptions," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

Table 18

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages,* by Sex

	Total Adults	Males	Females
Average for all editorial items	35%	35%	34%
Economic news, actions & policies	31%	34%	28%
Environment, resources, population, engery	36	37	35
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	30	32	28
War, rebellions, defense activity	44	48	40
Crime	48	48	47
Professional sports	30	39	20
Other sports	22	27	17
Editorials, unsigned	27	32	22
Editorial cartoons	36	44	29
Other editorial page content♦	31	34	29
Education, child care	33	31	35
Cultural events, arts, reviews	29	25	32
Other amusements◇	36	31	40
Personal advice columns	47	34	57
Other general interest●	36	32	40
Health, welfare, social issues	40	38	42
News summaries, briefs, index	51	51	51
All other content○	40	39	41

	Total Adults	Males	Females
International news items	40%	44%	37%
National news items	36	37	35
State & local news items	31	33	29

*Base is items on pages opened by qualified yesterday readers. Figures indicate that 35% of all editorial items were reported read; that 34% of all items in newspapers read by women were read; etc.

♦Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.

◇Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, TV & radio listings.

●Includes food, home, society, obituaries and gossip columns.

○All other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, religion, etc.).

Out of eighteen listed categories of editorial content in Table 18, "news summaries, news briefs" has the highest probability (51%) of being read. Readership of this kind of item is identical for newspapers read by men and women, suggesting that many of today's readers are busy people. News stories about crime, at 48%, rank second in the percentage read, and are also well read among both men and women.

Even though the overall figures indicate that the sex of the reader has no appreciable effect on the likelihood that an "average" item will be read, certain categories of editorial items show appreciable differences between the sexes. Virtually all kinds of "general interest" items are better read among women; this is particularly true for personal advice columns (57% of such items read among women, 34% among men). Conversely, an item about professional sports has a 39% chance of being read if the newspaper reader is male, but only a 20% chance if the reader is female.

Interest in Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers

Respondents who had not read a daily yesterday were taken through a sample of pages in a local newspaper they ordinarily read and asked about their level of interest in each editorial item of five column inches or more. The "interest" measures obtained in this way, shown in Appendix Table 5, roughly parallel figures for item readership. Many more men than women show interest in professional sports items, whereas figures for personal advice columns reveal the opposite pattern.

Expressing an interest in specific items is probably more subject to a "social desirability" bias than is recalled reading, especially for items that involve such issues as health, welfare and the environment, which may account for the higher average levels obtained on this measure.

How Do Reader Characteristics Affect Readership?

Demographic factors like the reader's sex, age, education, income and place of residence obviously affect the likelihood that particular kinds of editorial items will be read. In the aggregate, however, such factors exert less influence than intuition might suggest.

Table 19 shows item readership for total editorial content and for seven broadly defined categories that account for 85% of all items, by seven demographic variables. Excluding the total lines, there are 161 individual item readership figures in this table. Within this large array, the lowest figure shown is 19%, the level of sports item readership among women, non-metropolitan residents, and those not reporting household income. The highest figures is 47%, the level of international news item readership among college graduates.[1]

Table 19 is a useful corrective for folk wisdom, intuition and anecdotal evidence. The key point which should be made is that all kinds of people read all kinds of editorial content. The difference in the level of sports item readership among men (35%) and women (19%) is highly significant, but any snap judgment that sports items appeal only to men is clearly wrong. There are both upper and lower limits to the potential appeal of any given kind of editorial item, but no group shows near-zero interest in any category.

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[1] Certain items show higher or lower readership levels when combinations of demographic attributes are analyzed.

The attraction of newspaper content for so many kinds of readers may depend on the multi-dimensional aspects of most news and feature items. With the exception of specialized standing features (like crossword puzzles and bridge columns) most items have several potential "hooks" that can catch the reader's attention. A woman who finds football boring may look over a story about a neighbor's son who has been named best player on the state university team. A man with no special interest in financial news may read an item about his own employer.

The possibility of finding unexpected personal connections with stories in the newspaper may help to explain why 67% of all readers report going through yesterday's edition "page by page" (Table 7).

Table 19 is worth examining closely for the differences it reveals among demographic segments. For example, the only two categories of items showing higher readership figures for women than for men are "amusements" and "other general interest."

The table also suggests that item readership tends to be highest among the demographic segments most likely to be found in the daily newspaper audience. Readership of the "average" item and most of the seven categories is high for good newspaper readers (like college graduates) but low for poor readers (like adults under 25 years of age). Those who read most intensely and those who read most regularly tend to be the same kinds of people.

The two geographic classifications shown in the table are to a degree correlated with one another: non-metropolitan areas contain one-third of the population of readers in the South and North Central regions, as compared with less than 20% of those in the Northeast and West.

Table 19

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Demographics

	Average: All Items	Inter-national	National	State, Local
Total Adults	35%	40%	36%	31%
By Sex: Male	35%	44%	37%	33%
Female	34	37	35	29
By Age:				
18-24 years	28%	32%	28%	22%
25-34 years	36	39	31	31
35-44 years	36	38	38	32
45-64 years	37	45	38	34
65 years or older	35	41	41	31
By Education:				
College graduate	38%	47%	42%	36%
1-3 years college	34	42	37	24
High school graduate	34	33	33	31
Some high school or less	32	42	33	29
By Household Income:				
$35,000 & over	35%	40%	38%	33%
$25,000-$34,999	34	42	32	28
$15,000-$24,999	36	44	33	32
Under $15,000	34	40	37	30
Income refused	33	33	39	32
By Census Region:				
Northeast	38%	42%	42%	35%
North Central	31	35	32	26
South	34	40	36	33
West	37	44	33	28
By Locality Type:				
Central city	39%	41%	38%	35%
Suburban	37	42	40	31
Non-metropolitan	33	34	28	27

Table 19 (continued)

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Demographics

	Editorial Page†	Total Sports‡	Amusements††	Other General Interest‡‡
Total Readers	31%	27%	35%	36%
By Sex: Male	35%	35%	30%	32%
Female	27	19	39	40
By Age:				
18-24 years	29%	24%	25%	29%
25-34 years	30	31	41	39
35-44 years	28	32	32	41
45-64 years	33	29	35	37
65 years or older	32	21	37	35
By Education:				
College graduate	37%	28%	35%	40%
1-3 years college	34	27	32	37
High school graduate	28	30	36	36
Some high school or less	27	22	32	32
By Household Income:				
$35,000 & over	34%	23%	36%	37%
$25,000-$34,999	30	36	28	36
$15,000-$24,999	29	37	36	39
Under $15,000	31	23	39	41
Income refused	31	19	32	28
By Census Region:				
Northeast	38%	27%	36%	42%
North Central	24	25	34	32
South	31	26	33	35
West	33	31	39	38
By Locality Type:				
Central city	29%	20%	37%	41%
Suburban	33	26	38	40
Non-metropolitan	28	19	28	30

†Includes unsigned editorials, editorial cartoons, political columns and letters to the editor.

‡Includes professional sports and other sports.

††Includes cultural events, art, reviews, comics and other amusements.

‡‡Includes education, child care, personal advice columns, food, home, social news, obituaries and gossip columns.

Chapter Summary

Identifying the factors that influence the reading of specific kinds of editorial items is complicated by several methodological problems, but demographic variables such as the newspaper reader's sex, age, and educational level are clearly important.

As a rule, these demographic factors have more pronounced effects on the reading of particular categories of news and features than on the overall average. Item readership levels for men and women readers are virtually identical for the "average" editorial item but very different for specific editorial items such as sports and personal advice columns.

All kinds of readers show at least some interest in every kind of content, but the percent of items read on opened pages tends to be higher for those demographic segments that contain the best newspaper readers.

Readership of hard news items is probably subject to short-term as well as long-term shifts. In this survey, readership figures were five percentage points higher for international news items than for all items. This may reflect the importance of the Falkland Island crisis at the time of the survey, but it also jibes with responses to a question on readers' general interest in world and national vs. local news.[*]

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[*] See "Newspapers in American News Diets: A Comparative Assessment," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1984.

IV. HOW DO NEWSPAPER FACTORS AFFECT ITEM READERSHIP?

Chapter III looked at the general problem of measuring item readership and showed that the characteristics of readers affect the reading of different kinds of content, even though all kinds of readers read every type of content to some degree.

This chapter examines the relationship between item reading and the characteristics of the newspaper itself. The remarks on the problem of "interrelated variables" in Chapter III should serve as a reminder that in real life some newspaper attributes are closely tied to differences in reader characteristics, but it is not possible to discuss all of the connections between the two within the scope of this report.

Are Items In Fatter Newspapers Better Read?

One of the most controversial findings of this national study is that the percentage of items read on opened pages is higher for newspapers with 61 pages or more than for those with 24 or fewer pages,[1] but this is further supported by the detailed results shown in Table 20. (However, as pointed out in Chapter II, the percentage of total pages opened tends to drop as the number of pages increases.)

The general pattern holds for the average editorial item and for four out of seven broadly defined categories. The categories on which smaller and larger newspapers show the smallest differences are "state and local news," "editorial page" items, and "international news."

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[1] Number of pages are exclusive of those consisting entirely of classified advertising.

Table 20

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper

	Number of Pages:			
	24 or Less	25-40	41-60	61 & Over
Average, all items	29%	34%	38%	41%
International news	36%	40%	42%	41%
National news	29	37	35	42
State & local news	29	30	33	33
Editorial page items	32	26	31	34
Sports	20	27	35	46
Amusements	30	34	39	42
Other general interest	32	38	37	41

The pattern shown in Table 20 may seem contrary to expectation, but the consistency of the figures tends to validate the finding. It is unlikely that any single factor can explain why item readership should be higher for fatter newspapers, but several possible explanations will be offered in this chapter.

Initially, it might be noted that special-interest pages and sections are more common among fatter newspapers. Large daily newspapers might be thought of as having a "dual" audience structure: one "mass" audience attracted by hard news stories, and several large but distinct "segments" interested in other news and features of various kinds, such as business or entertainment.

Do Fatter Newspapers Offer More Hard News?

Major metropolitan dailies have large newsholes and consquently more editorial content of all types, but data from this study suggest that the fattest newspapers also carry a relatively larger number of hard news items and proportionately less in the way of general interest items, features and sports news (Table 21).

Table 21

Composition of Editorial Items on Opened Pages, by Size of Paper

	Number of Pages:			
	24 or Less	25-40	41-60	61 or Over
Hard news categories	20.8%	22.3%	28.0%	32.4%
International news	4.7%	5.0%	5.9%	11.1%
National news	4.0	3.6	5.9	7.0
State & local news	12.1	13.7	16.2	14.3
Editorial page (total)	6.7	6.5	7.7	9.3
Sports (total)	16.8	20.5	11.1	7.5
General interest (total)	42.3	37.4	37.0	33.0
All other	13.4	13.3	16.2	17.8

Base: Editorial items on opened pages in newspapers read by qualified yesterday readers.

In the thinnest newspapers, international news items represent about 5 of all items on opened pages, as compared with about 11 in the fattest newspapers. Conversely, the percentage of items falling into the sports category is twice as high among the smallest papers as it is among the largest, even though the absolute number of items carried by the largest can be much greater because of their larger newsholes.

--And Large and Small Papers Have Different Readers

Apart from any intrinsic differences in the content mix of fat newspapers and thin newspapers, there are important differences in the demographic mix of their audiences. Data on educational level and the kinds of localities in which readers live can serve to illustrate this critical point (Table 22).

Table 22

Education and Residence of Qualified Yesterday Readers, by size of paper

	Number of Pages: 24 or Less	25-40	41-60	61 & Over
Education:				
College graduate	14%	18%	21%	23%
1-3 years college	17	21	19	25
High school graduate	42	38	37	37
Some high school or less	25	22	20	15
Locality Type:				
SMSA central city	9%	29%	34%	44%
SMSA suburban	25	44	49	51
Non-metropolitan	66	27	17	5

Considering the kinds of demographic differences among readers shown in Table 22, changes in the mix of newspaper content might not overcome their influence and raise the average item readership level for small newspapers. Nevertheless, it might be worthwhile for some small dailies to consider a reduction in sports coverage: The sports category represents nearly 17% of all items in the thinnest papers (Table 21), but shows the lowest readership levels of any of the seven categories listed (Table 20) for newspapers of that size.

Item Readership in Morning, Evening and All-Day Editions

The thickness of a newspaper is also related to its publishing cycle, especially since a number of central city newspapers have suspended PM editions or merged former combinations into a single all-day newspaper. As previously shown in Table 17, AM and all-day papers have about 75% more pages than PM papers, on average. In spite of this large difference, average item readership levels across specific content categories are about the same for AM and PM editions (Table 23).[1]

Table 23

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Publishing Cycle

	AM	PM	All Day
Average, all items	35%	33%	43%
International news	41%	38%	42%
National news	35	34	46
State & local news	31	31	28
Editorial page items	33	28	34
Sports	27	26	44
Amusements	33	34	47
Other general interest	36	35	48

Many of the qualifying comments made about large and small newspapers also apply to papers with AM and PM publishing cycles. For example, readers of AM and all-day editions are more likely than PM readers to have college educations and less likely to live in non-metropolitan areas. (See Appendix Table 7.)

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[1] The all-day figures in this table are shown for the sake of completeness but there were only 138 qualified readers of all-day editions, so these figures are subject to substantial sampling variation (±9%).

Front-page Items Are the Best Read

Table 24 shows that hard news appearing on the front page has a better chance of being read than news items on other pages. This suggests that readers agree with editors on which news is most important, or that they have learned to rely on editors to decide for them which items deserve the greatest attention. International news items on the first page had a very high readership level (54%), in part reflecting the fact that the Falkland Islands crisis was the "biggest" news story at the time of the survey. But national and state or local news items also showed comparable gains from being placed on the front page.

Table 24

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Position in Paper

	Average: All Items	International	National	State, Local
Front page	47%	54%	43%	46%
Back page	35	□	□	29
Average interior spread	33%	36%	34%	28%
First spread	36%	35%	36%	29%
Second spread	32	35	36	28
Third spread	33	37	32	24
Fourth spread	30	36	32	24
First page of section	37	□	□	33
Back page of section	40	37	37	34

□Base too small for reliability.

In This Case, Bigger Is Better

Years of advertising research have shown that large-space ads attract more attention than small-space ads do, even though doubling the size of an ad doesn't double its readership. (That is, the relationship between size and readership tends to be positive but not "linear.")

This study's results indicate that the same kind of pattern holds for editorial items (Table 25). Figures for the readership of the average editorial item would reflect the influence of size even more clearly if comic strips were excluded. Almost all comic strips occupy less than ten inches of space, but readership of the average comic (37%) is slightly higher than the average for all editorial items. (See "Amusements" below.) Category by category, item readership reaches successively higher levels the greater the space devoted to items.

Table 25

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Size of Item

	Size of Item in Inches:		
	5-9+	10-19+	20 & Over
Average, all items	32%	33%	42%
International news	31%	36%	53%
National news	33	35	43
State, local news	26	29	40
Editorial page items	21	31	35
Sports	22	25	36
Amusements	37	27	33
Other general interest	31	35	46

Yes, Pictures Do Increase Readership

The late twentieth century is often described as a visual age, and many newspapers appear to support this assessment. More than a third of the daily papers (35%) responding to a 1983 survey[1] indicated that they had increased their use of photographs within the past few years.

Item readership figures from this survey (Table 26) show that reported reading is higher for items that include illustrations. It should be noted that these items also tend to occupy more space. (In Table 26, the label "mixed use" denotes only comic strips and editorial cartoons.)

Table 26

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Graphic Treatment

	Text Only	Text+ Illus.	Illus. Only	Mixed Use
Average, all items	31%	42%	43%	37%
International news	35%	56%	52%	□
National news	35	45	□	□
State, local news	28	43	48	□
Editorial page items	29	32	□	36%
Sports	24	38	33	□
Amusements	27	35	□	37
Other general interest	31	43	44	□

□Base too small for reliability.

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[1] "Newspaper Inventory: Summary Tables and Findings (Weekday Editions) 1983," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1983.

Are Right-hand Pages Better Read?

Certain advertisers regularly ask for right-hand page positions because they believe that this gives their ads a better chance of being read, even though research indicates little or no advantage for right-hand pages.[1]

Overall figures on the reading of editorial content on right-hand and left-hand pages differ by only two percentage points (Table 27). This is well within the range of sampling error, but even if there is a real difference favoring right-hand pages, it may depend on other correlated variables. (For example, more than 97% of all unsigned editorials appear on left-hand pages.)

Table 27

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages: Right- versus Left-hand Pages*

	Right Hand	Left Hand
Average, all items	34%	32%
International news	37%	35%
National news	36	34
State, local news	28	28
Editorial page items	30	31
Sports	25	26
Amusements	35	32
Other general interest	38	33

*Base on interior spreads only.

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[1] See "Research Facts on Position, Timing and Creativity," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1976.

Chapter Summary

The percentage of items read on opened pages is affected by newspaper-related factors as well as reader characteristics, and in some cases it is difficult to separate these two interrelated sources of variation.

Compared with thin newspapers, pages in fat papers have a somewhat smaller chance of being opened, but once readers of the latter turn to a page, they tend to read a higher percentage of the items on it. This may be because the larger newshole in these papers allows them to appeal to a wider range of special-interest readership segments, as well as to the mass audience for hard news.

Among the newspaper factors that tend to increase item readership are front-page position, a large amount of space, and the use of illustrations, but the intrinsic importance of an item's content in the eyes of editors may be more influential. That is, certain items can have one or more of these characteristics precisely because they are considered to have greater editorial importance. Items on the right-hand pages of interior spreads have little or no advantage over items on left-hand pages.

There are a few exceptions to these general patterns. For example, the average comic strip receives slightly better than average readership even though it is generally given little space.

APPENDIX

Appendix Exhibit 1

Detailed Editorial Content Codes

NOTE: (I)--Items classified as international news
(N)--Items classified as national news
(L)--Items classified as state and local news

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, ISSUES

Economics, governmental and private actions, policies

U.S. National Government/Political actions relating to the economy (excluding taxes) (N)
State or local government/Political actions relating to the economy (excluding taxes) (L)
International, foreign nation economic actions (I)
Taxes: rates, policies at any level
Domestic, local business/corporate activities, stocks, etc.

Labor, unions, wage agreements, policies, strikes

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, bargaining (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, bargaining (L)
Other labor, union or wage issues, not elsewhere classified

Travel, transportation

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Other travel, transportation-related items, not elsewhere classified

Farm, agricultural sector (crops, prices, programs, etc.)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Other farm, agriculture-related items

Environment, natural resources, population, energy, pollution

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Population trends, issues at any level
Energy problems, programs, resources at any level
Other environmental, resources, pollution issues

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 2)

SCIENCE, INVENTIONS

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
Foreign or international science developments (I)
Other science and invention, not elsewhere classified

GOVERNMENTAL OR POLITICAL ACTIONS (INCLUDING COURTS)

Specific actions by U.S./foreign governments, leaders

U.S. international, bilateral or multilateral actions (I)
U.S. National Government/Political actions by President, Congress, Federal Courts, etc. (N)
State or local government/Political actions (L)
Foreign nations, international agency actions not involving the U.S. (I)

War, conflict, rebellion, defense issues

Problems, conflicts in the Middle East (I)
Problems, conflicts in Latin America (I)
War in Falkland Islands (I)
Other wars rebellions, violent civil strife
Nuclear armaments, missiles, strategies, arms limitation talks
Conventional armaments, defense policies, talks, strategies

HEALTH AND WELFARE, SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Health and safety

Health (diseases, treatments, medical advice)
Consumer safety

Welfare (including proverty, aging, dependency, child abuse)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, programs, issues (N)
State or local government/Political actions, programs, issues (L)
Other welfare-related items, not elsewhere classified

Social problems (including alcholism, drugs, pornography, etc.)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, proposals, campaigns (N)
State or local government/Political actions, proposals, campaigns (L)
Other social problems, not elsewhere classified

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 3)

Race, Minorities, Civil Rights, Movements

U.S. National Government/Political acts relating to race, minorities, civil rights (N)
Other race, minority, civil rights items, not elsewhere classified
Protest movements pro/anti nuclear power
Other protest movements pro/anti abortion, ERA, morality, etc.

Education, school news, child care

U.S. National Government/Political actions, loans, grants, programs, federal policies, statistics, etc. (N)
State or local government/Political actions, budgets, programs, taxes, appointments, etc. (L)
Specific education, school news, not elsewhere classified
Child care, parenting (including advice columns)

Crime

U.S. National Government/Political crime controls, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political crime controls, policies, programs (L)
Juvenile crime, teenage delinquency
Hijacking, hostages, terrorism (U.S. or foreign acts)
Foreign--international locales of other specific crimes (I)
Other criminal acts, events, not elsewhere classified

SPORTS (news, photos, columns, box scores, etc.)

Professional sports, events
Other spectator sports
Participant sports

ARTS, AMUSEMENTS, GENERAL INTEREST

Arts and amusements

Cultural, arts events
Cultural, arts reviews
Radio-TV logs, daily schedules
Comic strips, features
Puzzles, games, horoscopes
Humor columns

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 4)

Editorials, op-ed pages

- Editorials, unsigned
- Editorial cartoons
- Letters to the editor
- Political columns, commentaries

Other general interest

- Weather
- Food
- Vacation, leisure, resorts and tours
- Fashion, style
- Home and garden-centered
  (furnishing, decorating, entertaining)
- Marriages, births, social news
- News of entertainers, celebrities, gossip columns
- Personal advice columns
- Obituaries
- Action line, consumer hotline, complaints column
- Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena

ALL OTHER ITEMS, NOT ELSEWHERE CLASSIFIED

- News summaries, news briefs
- Index, table of contents
- All other types of items, not elsewhere classified

Appendix Table 1

Content of Editorial Items, by Size of Item

	5-9+ Inches	10-19+ Inches	20+ Inches
Total Items	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Economic news, actions & policies	9.1%	13.5%	12.6%
Environment, resources, population, energy	1.4	2.0	1.4
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	6.0	9.4	5.3
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	2.7	4.7	5.7
Crime	6.4	7.0	3.6
Professional sports	9.4	11.0	14.7
Other sports	4.0	4.4	4.4
Editorials, unsigned	1.4	3.1	1.6
Editorial cartoons	0.6	2.2	0.9
Other editorial page content	1.4	3.3	9.6
Education, child care	3.6	4.3	4.3
Cultural events, arts, reviews	1.8	2.7	3.9
Other amusements	28.2	6.0	4.6
Personal advice columns	0.4	2.5	2.1
Other general interest	15.1	14.3	17.6
Health, welfare, social issues	3.1	4.4	3.8
News summaries, briefs, index	1.6	1.5	0.9
All other content	3.8	3.9	3.0

International news items	4.3%	7.0%	7.2%
National news items	3.5	6.9	3.7
State & local news items	11.9	16.2	14.2

Appendix Table 2

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Race

Editorial	White	Black
News about local community	89%	85%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	85	91
International or world news	84	84
News about President, Congress	78	77
News briefs, summary of news	77	75
News about local politics, gov't.	74	75
News about celebrities	71	68
TV program listings	66	77
Advice columns	66	57
Calendar of local events	61	58
Letters to the editor	62	45
Food pages	58	67
Editorials, editor's opinions	59	49
Comic strips, funnies	58	50
Obituaries	55	34
Sports news: local schools, etc.	50	54
Business & financial news	50	47
Sports news: professional teams	47	58
Political opinion columns	48	38
Book reviews	29	25
Crossword puzzle	23	31
Advertising		
Supermarket ads	62%	74%
Store ads for clothing	60	82
Classified or want ads	59	71
Movie ads	54	66

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Appendix Table 3

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Household Income

Editorial	$35,000 & Over	$25,000-$34,999	$15,000-$24,999	$10,000-$14,999	Under $10,000
News about local community	86%	93%	88%	88%	85%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	88	88	88	84	81
International or world news	85	89	85	84	77
News about President, Congress	81	84	73	78	75
News briefs, summary of news	80	84	77	76	68
News about local politics, gov't.	76	80	71	69	69
News about celebrities	69	76	71	70	68
TV program listings	62	68	72	70	66
Advice columns	61	65	68	63	66
Calendar of local events	54	66	63	60	56
Letters to the editor	58	64	62	52	56
Food pages	49	59	62	55	62
Editorials, editor's opinions	56	64	56	53	50
Comic strips, funnies	53	58	58	63	57
Obituaries	43	54	52	58	57
Sports news: local schools, etc.	56	56	51	53	41
Business & financial news	64	55	45	48	31
Sports news: professional teams	58	52	51	47	38
Political opinion columns	48	49	47	46	39
Book reviews	37	31	27	27	22
Crossword puzzle	27	21	20	22	27
Advertising					
Supermarket ads	53%	61%	66%	63%	74%
Store ads for clothing	59	65	62	58	59
Classified or want ads	55	67	62	65	58
Movie ads	57	60	59	53	45

Appendix Table 4

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education within Sex

Editorial	Men Some Coll+	Men HS Grad or Less	Women Some Coll+	Women HS Grad or Less
News about local community	87%	86%	92%	89%
News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc.	91	87	87	81
International or world news	92	84	90	75
News about President, Congress	85	79	82	70
News briefs, summary of news	84	75	84	71
News about local politics, gov't.	81	73	78	68
News about celebrities	69	61	82	73
TV program listings	63	66	66	71
Advice columns	46	45	83	80
Calendar of local events	57	56	71	61
Letters to the editor	63	52	69	59
Food pages	27	39	81	81
Editorials, editor's opinions	61	56	66	53
Comic strips, funnies	59	61	56	54
Obituaries	38	51	51	63
Sports news: local schools, etc.	59	66	41	40
Business & financial news	67	54	47	37
Sports news: professional teams	71	70	32	28
Political opinion columns	55	50	53	38
Book reviews	33	16	28	26
Crossword puzzle	20	19	28	26
Advertising				
Supermarket ads	36%	52%	77%	82%
Store ads for clothing	44	48	75	77
Classified or want ads	59	67	53	60
Movie ads	63	51	56	55

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Appendix Table 5

Interest in Sampled Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers*

	Total Adults	Males	Females
Average for all editorial items	44%	46%	42%
Economic news, actions, policies	44%	46%	41%
Environment, resources, population, energy	50	61	44
Government actions (U.S. & foreign)	43	40	45
Wars, rebellions, defense activity	57	55	59
Crime	58	56	60
Professional sports	29	50	14
Other sports	35	49	23
Editorials, unsigned	50	47	53
Editorial cartoons	45	46	44
Other editorial page content	47	46	47
Education, child care	45	43	46
Cultural events, arts, reviews	43	42	44
Other amusements	37	43	33
Personal advice columns	56	47	66
Other general interest	44	39	47
Health, welfare, social issues	61	59	62
News summaries, briefs, index	45	44	46
All other content	63	53	69

International news items	53%	52%	54%
National news items	51	51	50
State & local news items	41	44	39

*Figures shown represent "very interested" plus "somewhat interested."

Appendix Table 6

Composition of Frequent Reader, Infrequent Reader and Non-Reader Groups

	Frequent Readers†	Infrequent Readers‡		Non-Readers
Total Adults	100%	100%		100%
By Sex: Male	48%	43%		55%
Female	52	57		45
By Age:				
18-24 years	13%	26%		23%
25-34 years	21	27		25
35-44 years	16	19		11
45-54 years	15	11		14
54-64 years	15	7		9
65 years or older	19	9		17
By Education:				
College graduate	20%	12%		8%
1-3 years college	22	23		15
High school graduate	38	40		35
Some high school or less	19	24		42
By Household Income:				
$35,000 & over	17%	12%		5%
$25,000-$34,999	20	15		10
$15,000-$24,999	20	22		20
$10,000-$14,999	12	13		14
Under $10,000	13	22		29
By Locality Type.				
Central city	30%	33%		28%
Suburb	44	38		49
Non-metropolitan	26	29		23
By Home Ownership:				
Own	78%	NA	58%	NA
Rent	22	NA	41	NA

†Read four or five out of past five weekdays.

‡Read a daily or Sunday newspaper at least occasionally, but less than four of the past five weekdays.

Appendix Table 7

Composition of AM, PM and All-Day Newspaper Audiences

	AM Morning	PM Evening	All-Day
Total readers	100%	100%	100%
By Sex: Male	49%	47%	53%
Female	51	53	47
By Age:			
18-24 years	15%	15%	7%
25-34 years	21	18	34
35-44 years	15	16	21
45-64 years	28	32	25
65 years or older	21	18	11
By Education:			
College graduate	23%	14%	30%
1-3 years college	22	20	26
High school graduate	38	40	33
Some high school or less	17	25	11
By Household Income:			
$35,000 & over	18%	13%	22%
$25,000-$34,999	21	19	17
$15,000-$24,999	17	21	29
$10,000-$14,999	13	12	8
Less than $10,000	14	15	6
By Locality Type:			
SMSA central city	35%	20%	55%
SMSA suburban	48	41	38
Non-metropolitan	17	39	7
Base: Qualified yesterday readers			
Unweighted:	(555)	(595)	(138)

Appendix Table 8

Bases for All Newspaper Readers--Unweighted

	Total Readers	Qualified Readers	Yesterday Non-Readers
All respondents	1,803	1,288	515
By Age:			
18-24 years	238	132	106
25-34 years	404	255	149
35-44 years	331	222	109
45-54 years	249	197	52
55-64 years	258	209	49
65 years or older	310	260	50
By Education:			
College graduate	323	262	61
1-3 years college	383	259	124
High school graduate	707	485	222
Some high school or less	375	267	108
By Household Income:			
$35,000 & over	291	221	70
$25,000-$34,999	340	257	83
$15,000-$24,999	375	256	119
$10,000-$14,999	211	150	61
Under $10,000	245	158	87
By Locality Type:			
Central city	536	381	155
Suburb	802	584	218
Non-metropolitan	465	323	142
By Race:			
White	1,615	1,172	443
Black	151	99	52
By Region			
Northeast	435	341	94
North Central	506	333	173
South	550	401	149
West	312	213	99

Research Report

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. 485 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017

NEWSPAPER PAGES, ADS & READERS

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

May 1984

NATIONAL STUDY OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ITS AUDIENCES

PREFACE

In May 1982, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau designed and carried out a nationwide survey of the readership of daily newspapers. The field work was conducted by Audits & Surveys, Inc. with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. The questionnaires used in the interview covered a wide range of topics: newspaper reading, television viewing, exposure to news media, readers' content preferences, ratings of the performance of the daily paper, circulation patterns, and detailed demographic information.

As part of the interview, newspaper readers were also taken through a copy of the paper they read yesterday, or the one they usually read, and asked about their readership of or interest in specific editorial and advertising items on sampled pages in that paper. These items were coded in several ways: size, use of text or illustrations, location in the paper, etc.

Although daily newspapers throughout the United States share certain characteristics, each newspaper is a unique publication reflecting particular editorial policies and local conditions. No national overview of newspaper content can do justice to this uniqueness, but national surveys of content serve as useful benchmarks that may detect journalistic trends over time.

Similar national newspaper readership surveys conducted in 1971, 1977 and 1982 included a detailed analysis of the editorial content of selected pages in daily newspapers. The basic purpose of the selection and weighting procedures used was to make these representative of all newspaper pages in circulation, excluding those on spreads that consist entirely of classified advertising. Measurements taken on the entire base of sampled pages were limited to items of five column inches or more, including both advertising and editorial items.

The results of this survey are presented in a series of detailed reports dealing with circulation issues, news habits of the American public, page traffic and ad readership, attitudes about the performance of the daily press, and the content and readership of news and features. A separate technical report on the survey, prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc., that contains copies of the questionnaires used in the study is also available.

This study was sponsored by the Newspaper Readership Project and carried out by NAB's Research Department.

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HIGHLIGHTS

1. The content of newspaper display advertising is as diverse as the products and services in the American marketplace. No one of the twenty-nine categories used in this analysis accounts for more than 9% of all display ads.
2. Reader traffic through the newspaper provides advertisers with excellent opportunities for exposure. The average page is opened by nearly four out of five readers. Factors like sex, age, education and income have little effect on page opening levels.
3. Seven out of ten ads are less than a quarter of a page in size, but national ads are substantially larger than retail ads.
4. As shown in previous research, reported ad reading varies with both interest in the product and the size of the ad. National ads, being larger, get above average readership.
5. An ad's chances of being read are not significantly affected by position within the paper or placement on the page. The presence of other ads on the same page may actually boost readership.
6. Both readership and interest in advertising varies by product category. Women respond to more ads than men do, reflecting the greater volume of advertising addressed to them.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Broad Variety of Newspaper Display Ads

One of the most striking characteristics of the daily newspaper as a medium is its universality, as demonstrated not only by its widespread readership among different population groups, but also by its wide range of editorial content.* This diversity is also reflected in newspaper R.O.P. display advertising, which is scattered across a wide array of products and services, as Table 1 shows. The largest single category of ads, numerically, is movies and entertainment, which accounts for 9% of the total. This reflects the multiplicity of small ads for individual theaters, and represents a substantially smaller proportion of the total display advertising space. Conversely, airline ads, which tend to be of larger than average size, represent only 1% of the total number, and supermarket ads account for 4%. It must be remembered that preprint advertising is not included in this study.

Ad Size, National and Retail, B/W and Color

Seven out of ten newspaper ads within the measured universe (5 column inches or larger) are less than one quarter of a page large, but these ads account for only an estimated one third of the total display advertising space. (Table 2). But 45% of the ad space is taken up by ads that are at least a half page in size, which represent only 14% of the total number.

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* Meeting Readers' Multiple Needs, Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1984.

However, national and retail ads show a different pattern, as Table 3 shows. National ads account for only 9% of the total number of display ads, but they represent an estimated 19% of the total display advertising space.

Only 2% of daily R.O.P. display ads use color, but they account for 9% of all national ads and 1.5% of retail ads. In fact, 35% of the color ads are national ads. Table 4 shows that nearly half of all color ads are a full page or larger, and the average size is substantially greater than that of black and white ads, for obvious reasons.

Page Opening and the Opportunity for Ad Exposure

The opening of a spread by the newspaper reader creates the opportunity for every ad and editorial item on those pages to come to the reader's attention. (The page opening technique has been repeatedly validated by experimental studies using the "glue-spot" technique.) In our survey, page opening was measured for the front and back page of each newspaper in the sample, and for four other randomly selected spreads, excluding only those made up entirely of classified advertisements. (Front and back pages were oversampled to enrich the measurement of editorial matter, and were statistically reduced in weight to account for their proper proportion of total pages.) The methodology, originally developed in technical consultation with the Advertising Research Foundation, has been used in a series of studies conducted by Audits and Surveys for the Newspaper Advertising Bureau since 1963, and is fully described in a separate technical report.

As table 5 shows, nearly eight out of ten pages are opened by the average reader, and this proportion does not vary significantly among readers of different kinds. Spreads in thin papers get slightly higher opening than those in thicker papers, which are more apt to have physically separate sections, in some cases appealing to specialized interests (Table 6). Since metropolitan newspapers have the largest numbers of pages and of separate sections, their page opening levels are somewhat less than those of smaller dailies (Table 7). However, when pages are categorized according to their dominant editorial content (Table 8) it is apparent that a substantial majority of them are opened regardless of their subject matter. The below average opening levels reported for certain kinds of pages, like those made up entirely of advertising, display or classified, may well represent an understatement reflecting a lower level of interest than there is in most types of news.

The Dimensions of Ad Readership

For every ad and editorial item of five column inches or larger, readers who said they had opened the spread were asked," Did you see or read any part of this?" It has long been understood that the noting or recognition scores that result from this type of question reflect readers' interests in what is advertised, or their response to the creative technique, and are a substantial understatement of what they actually look at (as measured by an eye camera record). Thus the actual percentages of reported noting are of less interest than the variations among different types of readers and ads.

Altogether, the average ad is reported as having been read by 16% of the readers who opened the page on which it appears. However this proportion ranges from 12% for ads of less than a quarter page to 44% for ads of a full page or more. (Table 9). National ads get scores that average higher (21%) than retail ads (15%), as Table 10 shows. However, this comparison may be misleading, since the mix of advertised products and services, along with the corresponding variations in consumer interest, is different for national and retail ads. (This explains why the largest retail ads outperform the largest national ads; they are simply selling different things). In addition, more of the national ads are bigger ads. These qualifications must also be kept in mind in observing that color ads outperform black and white ads by two to one (Table 11). As we have already seen, color ads are larger, and advertise a different array of merchandise and services.

Ad Position and Readership

The reported level of readership does not differ between ads on left and right hand pages (Table 12), conforming to the findings of much previous research. Ads on back pages of sections, or of the newspaper, get higher scores than those on interior spreads, but there are only minor differences among the ads on pages closer to the front or to the back of the paper. (Table 13).

The presence of other ads on the same page appears to add rather than to detract from levels of readership, as Table 14 suggests. Among both men and women, ads that appear on pages that are half or less advertising get lower readership scores than ads on pages with over 50% advertising. Could this merely reflect the greater attention paid to larger ads? Even when ads of half a page or more are eliminated, it is apparent that the presence of other advertising is a plus. (It must be recalled that pages which contain predominantly editorial matter may tend to be more specialized in content, and may not be comparable in all respects to pages in which advertising predominates.)

Ad Readership and Reader Characteristics

Women report reading more ads (19%) on opened pages than men do (12%). This is in keeping with the findings of a long series of readership studies, and undoubtedly reflects the preponderant number of display ads that appeal to women consumers.

The difference between the sexes is apparent among readers of every age, but recognition scores are lower among older readers, as might be expected. (Table 15) Readers in families with different incomes have almost the same scores, (Table 16) but high school graduates show a slightly higher than average recognition of the typical ad. (Table 17).

Ad Readership by Product Category

It has already been mentioned that the nature of the advertised product or service can affect the attention given to an ad, because some items are inherently more interesting than others and because some items tend to be advertised in larger space units and also because some items tend to be advertised in color. These factors are reflected in the first column of Table 18, which shows the readership scores for ads in different product categories, among readers who opened the pages on which those ads appeared. Retail food advertising gets by far the highest reported readership. In fact the average food ad was reported as read by 46% of the women readers who had opened the page. (Separate statistics are not shown for all categories, because of the comparatively small number of ads measured in many of them).

As already described in an earlier report in this series,* interviews were conducted with most of the one-third of the original national probability sample who had not read a daily newspaper yesterday, as well as with the two-thirds who had. (The 10% who said they never read a paper were excluded). The non-readers were questioned in depth about the preceding day's issue of the particular daily paper that they said they would be most likely to read (or in the case of those few without a preference, a local daily selected at random). Like the readers, they were taken through four randomly selected spreads, plus the front and back pages (with the appropriate statistical weighting applied to eliminate bias). Since these non-readers could not be questioned about their prior readership of each editorial and advertising item on those pages, they were asked instead whether or not they were interested in it. The second column of Table 18 shows a variability in interest level, by product category, which is comparable to the variability in readership, although it is not exactly parallel for individual categories. For example, retail food advertising arouses only slightly more interest than readership, as does apparel advertising. However advertising for airlines, computers, jewelry and real estate creates proportionately far more interest among non-readers than reported readership among readers. Overall, the average item gets a level of interest which is nearly 50% higher than is recalled readership.

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* The Daily Newspaper: Readership and Content Technical Appendix. (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1984)

How Interest in Advertising Varies

We have already seen that national ads, partly because they are larger, get higher readership than retail ads, and the same results are found when non-reader interest scores are analyzed. The average national ad scores 33%, retail 22%. The effect of ad size is directly reflected in Table 19, which recaps the readership levels for ads of different sizes, and compares them with the interest levels among non-readers. It is apparent that larger ads arouse greater interest, even though, for a non-reader, the exposure opportunity is held constant. This merely vindicates the advertiser's common-sense judgment that when he buys a larger unit of space he not only has an opportunity to tell a more comprehensive story, but also has a better chance to maximize the exposure opportunity presented by the opened newspaper page.

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF ITEMS ON OPENED PAGES

(by product category)

Airlines	115	1%
Alcoholic beverages	197	1
Automotive (not parts)	716	4
Automotive parts/services	678	4
Building materials/construction	626	4
Women's clothing	790	5
Men's clothing	396	2
Child/non specified clothing	366	2
Computer/video games	199	1
Farm & garden	130	1
Financial	380	2
Food/drugs/household supplies/pet supplies	973	6
Hotel/resort	184	1
Household appliances	378	2
Household furniture and furnishings	1,268	8
Jewelry/chinaware/toiletry/luggage/leather goods	496	3
Movies/entertainment	1,516	9
Photo/camera supplies	160	1
Publishing/media	862	5
Real estate	221	1
Restaurant/fast food chains	1,025	6
Supermarket/other food stores	597	4
Tobacco/smoking	254	2
TV/radio/stereo/tapes/records	401	3
Legal notes/professional services/education	770	5
Sport/sports equipment/physical fitness	618	4
Domestic/local business	524	3
Omnibus	547	3
All other	1,218	7
TOTAL	16,605	100%

(Based on pages opened by yesterday newspaper readers.)

Table 2

NUMBER OF ADS ON OPENED PAGES

(by size of ad)

Size of Ad	Unweighted base	Percent of total	Estimated percent of total ad space*
Less than one-quarter page	11,569	70%	33%
One-quarter to less than half page	2,639	16%	22%
Half to less than full page	1,377	8%	23%
Full page or more	1,020	6%	22%
Total	16,605	100%	100%

* Ads that are less than one quarter page carry a weight of 0.13.

Ads that are one quarter to less than half page carry a weight of 0.38.

Ads that are half to less than full page carry a weight of 0.75.

Ads that are full page or more carry a weight of 1.

Based on pages opened by yesterday newspaper readers.

Table 3

NUMBER OF RETAIL AND NATIONAL ADS ON OPENED PAGES

(by size of ad)

Size of Ad	Retail		National		Total	
Less than one-quarter	11,036	73%	533	36%	11,569	70%
One-quarter to less than half page	2,254	15%	385	26%	2,639	16%
Half to less than full page	1,092	7%	285	20%	1,377	8%
Full page or more	762	5%	258	18%	1,020	6%
	15,144	100%	1461	100%	16,605	100%
Total	(91%)		(9%)		(100%)	

Based on pages opened by yesterday newspaper readers.

Table 4

NUMBER OF BLACK & WHITE AND COLOR ADS ON OPENED PAGES

(by size of ad)

Size of Ad	Black & White		Color		Total	
Less than one-quarter	11,537	71%	32	9%	11,569	70%
One-quarter to less than half page	2,572	16%	67	20%	2,639	16%
Half to less than full page	1,300	8%	77	23%	1,377	8%
Full page or more	856	5%	164	48%	1,020	6%
	16,265	100%	340	100%	16,605	100%
Total	(98%)		(2%)		(100%)	

Based on pages opened by yesterday newspaper readers.

Table 5

PERCENT OPENING AVERAGE PAGE

Total yesterday readers		77%
By sex:	Male	75
	Female	79
By age:	18-24 years	75
	25-34 years	75
	35-44 years	77
	45-54 years	80
	55-64 years	78
	65 years or older	78
By education:		
	College graduate	77
	1-3 years college	76
	High school graduate	79
	Some high school or less	74
By household income:		
	$35,000 & over	75
	$25,000-$34,999	76
	$15,000-$24,999	77
	$10,000-$14,999	79
	Under $10,000	78
By locality type:		
	Central city	76
	Suburb	77
	Non-metropolitan	78

Base: Qualified yesterday readers = 100%

Table 6

AVERAGE PAGE OPENING BY NUMBER OF PAGES IN NEWSPAPER[a]

Number of Pages in Newspaper	Average Page Opening[b]	
	Percent	# of Pages
24 or less	83%	20
25 - 40	78%	25
41 - 60	76%	38
61 & Over	74%	59

Base: Qualified yesterday readers.

[a] Excludes those pages that consist entirely of classified advertising.

[b] Estimates based on the following multiples: for 24 pages or less, 24; for 25-40 pages, 32; for 41-60 pages, 50; for 61 pages and over, 80.

Table 7

PERCENT OPENING AVERAGE PAGE BY CIRCULATION

Over 250,000	72%
100,000 - 250,000	72%
25,000 - 100,000	81%
Under 25,000	82%

Base: Qualified yesterday readers.

Table 8

PERCENT OPENING AVERAGE PAGE BY TYPE OF PAGE

		(Base)
General news	83%	(4597)
Women's Pages (TOTAL)	75%	(905)
Food	65%	(151)
Fashion	84%*	(24)
Society	86%	(130)
Men's Pages (TOTAL)	71%	(1901)
Business/Finance	68%	(473)
Sports	71%	(1428)
Editorials	80%	(499)
Obituaries	79%	(116)
Classified	62%	(266)
Radio/TV	74%	(172)
Comics	80%	(254)
Amusements	79%	(692)
Home/Garden	57%	(61)
Columnists	76%	(206)
Advertising only	67%	(1467)
Agriculture/Farm	82%*	(27)
Health/Science	88%	(64)
Area/Local News	82%	(1024)
Other	71%	(52)

* Base small. Shown for completeness only.

Table 9

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES

(by size of ad)

Less than one-quarter page	12%
One-quarter to less than half page	17%
Half to less than full page	25%
Full page or more	44%
Average for all ads	16%

Table 10

PERCENT OF RETAIL AND NATIONAL ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES

(by size of ad)

Size of Ad	Retail	National
Less than one-quarter page	12%	15%
One-quarter to less than half	17%	19%
Half to less than full page	25%	26%
Full page or more	48%	33%
Average for all ads	15%	21%

Table 11

PERCENT OF RETAIL AND NATIONAL ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES

(by color of ad)

	Black & White	Color
Retail	15%	33%
National	21%	29%
Average for all ads	15%	31%

Table 12

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES*, LEFT VS RIGHT-HAND PAGE, BY SEX

Sex of reader	Left hand	Right hand
Male	12%	11%
Female	19%	19%
Total Adults	15%	15%

* Ads only on interior spreads were tabulated. Totals do not include ads larger than a full page.

Table 13

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES BY LOCATION IN NEWSPAPER

(by sex)

	Male	Female	Total Adults
Back page	25%	23%	24%
Average interior spread	12%	19%	15%
First interior spread	11%	17%	14%
Second interior spread	10%	18%	14%
Third interior spread	14%	20%	17%
Fourth interior spread	11%	21%	16%
First page of section	6%	14%	11%
Back page of section	19%	24%	22%

Table 14

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES BY AD CONTENT OF PAGE

(by sex)

	Male	Female	Total adults
Ad content 50 % or less	8%	14%	11%
Ad content over 50%	14%	22%	18%
(ads of half-page +)	*	*	15%

* Not available

Table 15

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES BY AGE

(by sex)

Age	Male	Female	Total Adults
18 - 24	11%	24%	18%
25 - 34	11%	20%	16%
35 - 44	14%	21%	18%
45 - 64	14%	16%	15%
65 and over	9%	17%	13%
Total	12%	19%	16%

Table 16

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES BY ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME

Income	Total Adults
$35,000 or more	16%
$25,000 - $35,000	16%
$15,000 - $25,000	16%
$10,000 - $15,000	13%
Under $10,000	14%

Table 17

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES BY EDUCATION

Education	Total
Adults	13%
College graduate or higher	15%
Some college	18%
High school graduate	14%
Less than high school graduate	

Table 18

AD PERFORMANCE BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

PERCENT OF ADS READ ON OPENED PAGES
(By Readers, and Percent "Interested" in Ads
on Comparable Pages, by Non-Readers)

	Reading (Readers)	Interest (Non-Readers)
Average for all ads	16%	23%
Airlines	24%	40%
Alcoholic beverages	12	15
Automotive (not parts)	16	24
Automotive parts/services	11	19
Building materials/construction	7	16
Women's clothing	19	22
Men's clothing	15	17
Child/non specified clothing	14	28
Computer/video games	8	20
Farm & garden	10	18
Financial	12	29
Food/drugs/household supplies/pet supplies	12	23
Hotel/resort	15	15
Household appliances	12	17
Household furniture and furnishings	16	23
Jewelry/chinaware/toiletry/luggage/leather goods	12	20
Movies/entertainment	18	29
Photo/camera supplies	16	13
Publishing/media	12	18
Real estate	6	17
Restaurant/fast food chains	15	20
Supermarket/other food stores	36	39
Tobacco/smoking	20	13
TV/radio/stereo/tapes/records	22	19
Legal notes/professional services/education	11	17
Sport/sports equipment/physical fitness	14	21
Domestic/local business	13	21
Omnibus	34	38
All other	16	20

Table 19

AD SIZE AND PERFORMANCE

(Percent of Ads Read on Opened Pages by Readers,
and Percent "Interested" in Ads on Comparable Pages,
by Non-Readers)

	Reading (Readers)	Interest (Non-Readers)
Double truck	40%	49%
Full page	37	42
Half page or more	31	25
Quarter-half page	28	17
Less than quarter page	20	12